

Rolling Stone



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**President Obama:
The Rolling Stone
Interview**

By Jann S. Wenner

EXCLUSIVE

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ALLMAN'S
MEMOIRS**

**FLOYD 'MONEY'
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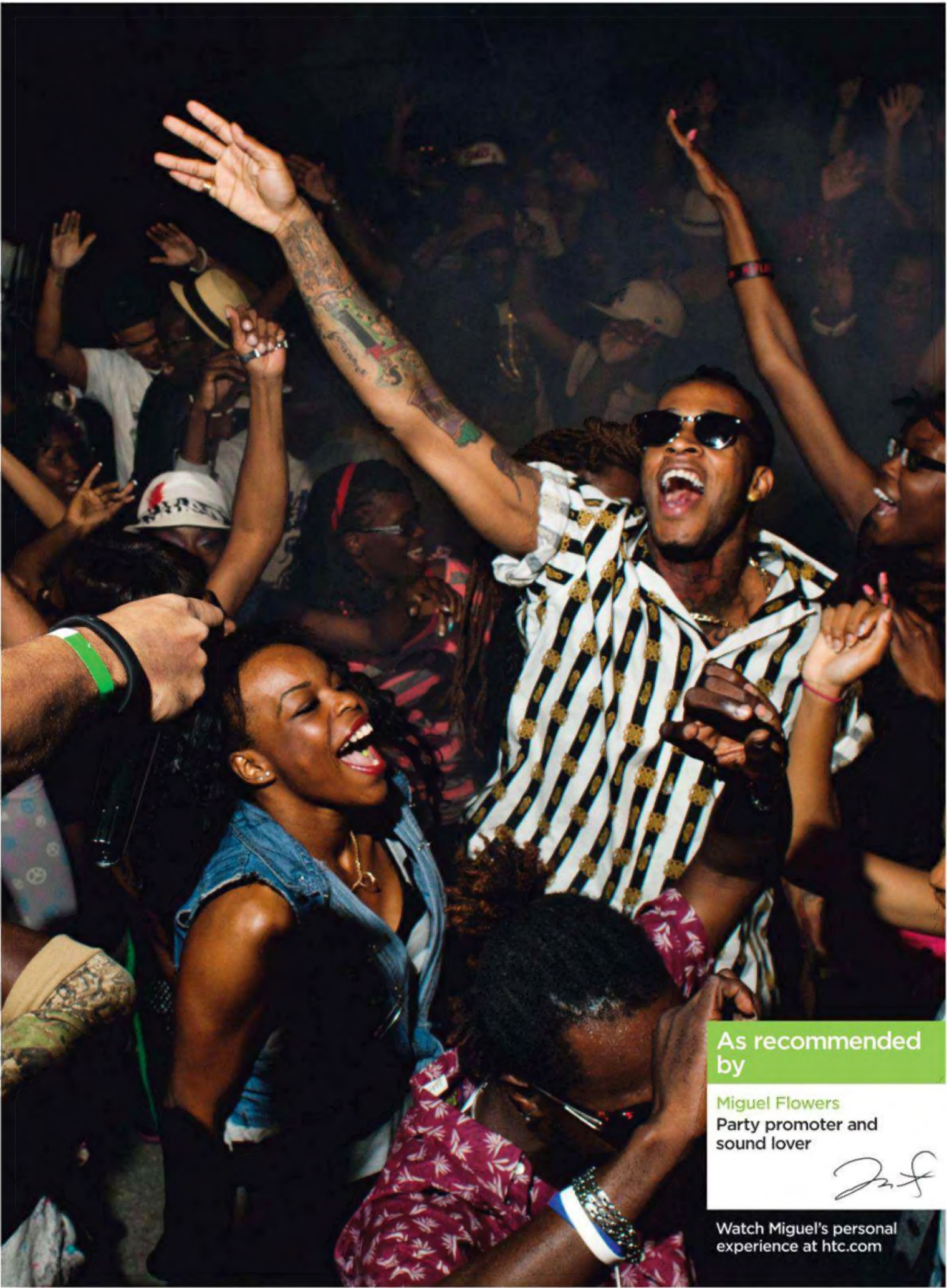
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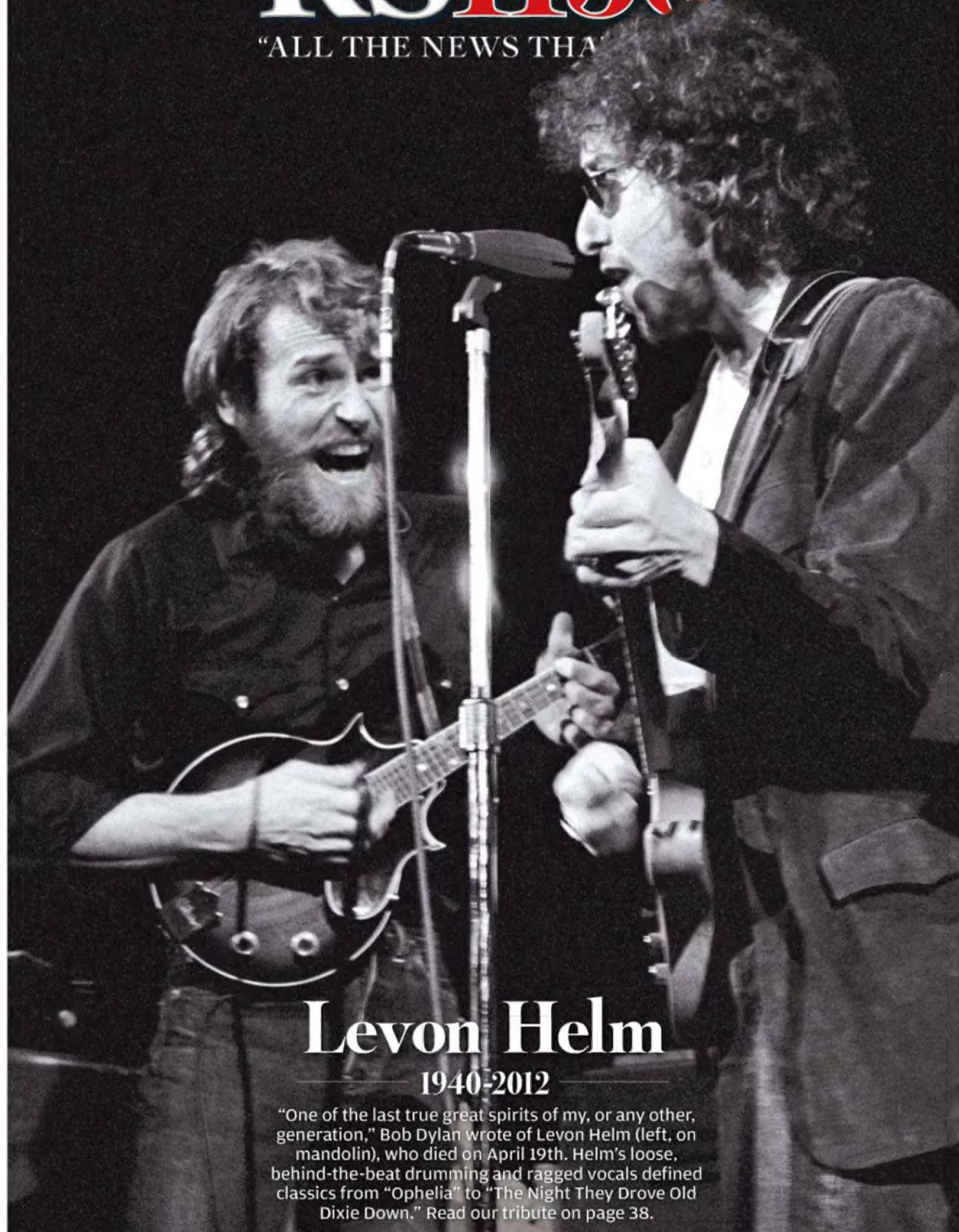
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RS1156

"ALL THE NEWS THAT"



Levon Helm

1940-2012

"One of the last true great spirits of my, or any other, generation," Bob Dylan wrote of Levon Helm (left, on mandolin), who died on April 19th. Helm's loose, behind-the-beat drumming and ragged vocals defined classics from "Ophelia" to "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Read our tribute on page 38.

The Party. Circa 1957.



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LISTEN

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Live reports and backstage interviews from the desert fest - starring Radiohead, Dr. Dre, St. Vincent (above) and many more.

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RS LIVE Train: Live at 'Rolling Stone'

Watch Train perform their new song "Drive By" and their 2001 hit "Drops of Jupiter."

Peter Gabriel Gets Symphonic

STREAM Gabriel recruited a 46-piece orchestra for his new concert LP, *Live Blood* - featuring new versions of hits from "In Your Eyes" to "Solsbury Hill," plus deep cuts like "Intruder" and "Downside-Up." Stream the album exclusively at rollingstone.com.





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Correspondence

{ Love Letters & Advice }



Girl on Fire

JOSH EELLS' PIECE ABOUT *Hunger Games* star Jennifer Lawrence ["America's Kick-Ass Sweetheart," RS 1154] captured her personality so well. She is one serious actress, and tough as nails too!

Nicole Sartain, Santa Rosa, CA

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I couldn't like Jennifer Lawrence more, I read this article and officially have a schoolboy crush on her.

Alex Mellon, Boston

JENNIFER LAWRENCE HAD me at "day drinking."

Caitlin Potter, Philadelphia

HERE'S A SUGGESTION FOR Lawrence: That soap she never uses after she pees? She should wash her mouth out with it.

Ann Vassiliou
Sherman Oaks, CA

Ivy League Haze

AFTER READING JANET Reitman's horrific article on hazing ["Confessions of an Ivy League Frat Boy," RS 1154], it occurred to me that perhaps Dartmouth should adopt a new motto: "Molding tomorrow's sociopaths today."

Mike Villano, Lake Balboa, CA

IS ANYONE SURPRISED THAT it is the same culture of entitlement in the frat houses that also drives Wall Street? To enter into this culture, you have to rid yourself of all self-respect – and without self-respect, there is no need to respect anyone else.

Casey Stennick, Clatskanie, OR

FUCK ANDREW LOHSE. HE could have chosen to not join a fraternity. The camaraderie of my fraternity days is a great memory, and I still smile when I think about chugging Mad Dog and puking.

David R. Frazer, Morgan Hill, CA

AS SOMEONE CURRENTLY IN a Texas fraternity, I can confidently say that Reitman's article doesn't even scratch the surface of what's happening. The events she describes are common everywhere. As for Lohse, he is a coward and a squealer who had no business pledging if he couldn't handle being a brother.

David Elkin, via the Internet

I HAVE A THEORY THAT THE driving force behind the morally bankrupt culture of corporate America is simply traumatized frat boys taking their PTSD out on the rest of us.

Jonathan Faux, San Francisco

YOUR STORY PAINTS A GROSSLY misleading portrait of Dartmouth and resorts to hearsay and sensationalism. The attempt to stereotype life at Dartmouth based on the "confessions" of one individual is unbalanced and is indeed in stark contrast to the experience of the vast majority of our students.

"I have a theory that the driving force behind morally bankrupt corporate America is frat boys with PTSD."

Dartmouth strongly condemns hazing, high-risk drinking and sexual assault, and has rigorous policies in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of our students. It is regrettable that ROLLING STONE has sought to reduce life at Dartmouth to a one-dimensional, inaccurate caricature.

Charlotte Johnson, Dean of the College, Dartmouth College

Janet Reitman responds: Andrew Lohse's experiences are far from isolated. They were confirmed by other members of his fraternity, and many simi-

lar experiences were told to me by members of other frats, as well as alumni and faculty. I appreciate Dartmouth's wanting to protect its reputation, and hope my article provides the administrators with ample facts to address the very real issues they face.

Obama's Plan

I WAS APPALLED TO READ Tim Dickinson's excellent description of the Obama campaign's strategy to eke out re-election by being less noxious than the other guys ["Hope 2.0," RS 1154]. Until I hear an apology from Obama for negotiating with the GOP rather than pushing for real reform, my support will stay at zero.

Matt Pensinger, Hanover, PA

DICKINSON'S ARTICLE ON Obama's campaigns, past and present, leaves me deeply dis-

appointed. We voted for the man because we wanted meaningful change. If he hadn't so quickly cut loose the supporters he had in 2008, he would have a grassroots movement today.

Jim Corbin, Portland, ME

Sonic Sorcerer

DAVID FRICKE'S INTERVIEW with Jimmy Iovine ["The Man With the Magic Ears," RS 1154] was an incredible peek into the mind of a genius. He deserves to be in the same pantheon as the legends he's produced.

Dennis LeBlanc, Tustin, CA

ENJOYABLE INTERVIEW, BUT among Iovine's many self-proclaimed talents, humility is obviously not one of them.

Jonas Singleton, Hannibal, MO

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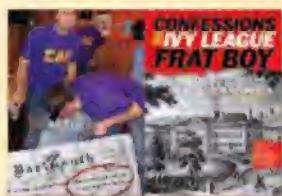
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What They're Saying

The buzz about our Dartmouth hazing story (RS 1154)

JANET REITMAN'S EXPOSÉ "Confessions of an Ivy League Frat Boy" set off a firestorm of debate that reached far beyond Dartmouth. Reuters' Felix Salmon hailed it as a "must-read" and questioned whether college president Jim Yong Kim, tapped by Obama to head the World Bank, was qualified for the job. Many alumni rushed to the defense of their alma mater: Caroline



Esser, writing for Slate, called her sorority experience "laughably innocent." Another alum, Frank Santo, argued in the *New York Daily News* that Reitman focused on a few "jerkish" bad apples in order to "conjure up populist moral outrage." But the

blog Ivygate praised the story as "a well-written meditation on class, violence and power in Dartmouth's overheated campus culture."

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Rock & Roll



WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE
Guns N' Roses' Sorum, McKagan, Slash and Adler (from left). Bottom: Gibbons and Trucks honor Freddie King.

Guns, Chili Peppers Top Wild Class

Plus Beasties, Faces, Donovan and more rock Cleveland ceremony
By Brian Hiatt

WITH RAGING PERFORMANCES from most of Guns N' Roses' original lineup and the reunited Faces, the 27th annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony offered definitive proof that great bands are always bigger than any one member – even if that member happens to be a superstar lead singer. Axl Rose declined to show up; the Faces' Rod Stewart came down with the flu. “Most of the groups there were incomplete,” says former Guns guitarist Slash, “but the whole thing goes on, regardless. It’s bigger than all of us.”

Beastie Boys, Red Hot Chili Peppers and the late Laura Nyro, among others, were



also inducted at the ceremony, which for the third time in its history took place in Cleveland’s ornate, 90-year-old Public Hall, rather than the smaller Waldorf-Astoria ballroom in New York. VIPs in formalwear – from Robbie Robertson and Michael J. Fox to Bette

Midler and Berry Gordy – packed the floor, while thousands of everyday fans went nuts in the bleachers. The induction ceremony capped off 10 days of events at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, and around the

city. “Cleveland made a big difference,” says Hall of Fame Foundation chairman and **ROLLING STONE** editor and publisher Jann S. Wenner. “The excitement of everybody in the city pays off in the mood and the energy of the performances.”

The ceremony (which airs May 5th on HBO) began with a surprise performance by Green Day that saw Billie Joe Armstrong bounding across the stage and screaming, “Get up, this is fucking rock & roll! This is a celebration! Motherfuckers, get your hands together!” The traditional closing all-star jam was equally raucous, with the Chili Peppers leading a motley, once-in-a-lifetime group of musicians – including Armstrong,



Slash, the Faces' Ronnie Wood and Kenney Jones, and George Clinton – through an unhinged, nearly seven-minute-long version of Stevie Wonder's "Higher Ground," gleefully dipping in and out of noisy chaos.

The night's most thrilling moment was the performance by most of Guns N' Roses' long-dormant original lineup: Slash, Duff McKagan and the band's first two drummers, Steven Adler and Matt Sorum. They reclaimed three songs ("Mr. Brownstone," "Sweet Child O' Mine" and "Paradise City") from *Appetite for Destruction* – the LP Armstrong called "the best debut album in the history of rock & roll" in his induction speech. Guest vocalist Myles Kennedy, from Slash's current solo band, nailed even the most punishing high notes, while onetime Guns guitarist Gilby Clarke filled in for absent original member Izzy Stradlin, who rarely makes public appearances. On the two songs with Adler on drums, McKagan kept

turning to face him, locking into the groove that made them one of their era's most powerful rhythm sections. Slash was the obvious star, his melodic solos and fat Les Paul tone serving as a reminder that these songs belong to him and his bandmates as much as they do their singer.

Slash had held out hope of performing one last time with Rose. "In my heart of hearts, what I wanted to do was have the whole original band actually perform," he says. "Which I sort of knew was wishful thinking."

At one point, Rose had indicated that he would attend but not perform – so the rest of the band readied itself to do the same. Then, just three days before the ceremony, Rose announced that he wouldn't be coming at all – and Slash and

McKagan quickly decided to get onstage. "Basically we felt a sense of loyalty to the fans," says Slash, riding a train between Paris and Holland the week after the ceremony. "The legions of Guns fans were really the glue that held us all together to get past whatever the differences were and just go up and be there."

The band members gathered for a secret late-night rehearsal at Cleveland's House of Blues the night before the ceremony, and reconvened at a closed Public Hall around noon – and though they were unaccustomed to playing with Adler (who was thrown out of the band for excessive-even-for-GNR drug use in 1990), it all came together "after a couple minutes," according to Slash. For Adler, who has un-

dergone years of on-and-off rehab, dreaming of a reunion all the while, it was a powerful moment: "It was the greatest way to end that chapter of my life."

Steven Van Zandt inducted the Faces (along with their previous incarnation, the Small Faces), and their performance also came together at the last minute. When Stewart announced he was too ill to sing, they reached out on one day's notice to Simply Red's Mick Hucknall, who has been touring with the Faces recently on vocals. Hucknall sounded uncannily like Stewart, and the band resurrected its circa-1971 boozy roar. A sober, hyperenergized Wood careened around the stage like a teenager, gliding between Chuck Berry-derived rhythm licks and stabbing lead



IN THE NEWS

Summer festival season heats up

Two more top fests have announced their acts for this summer. On August 3rd, a rock-heavy lineup – includ-



ing the **Black Keys**, **Black Sabbath**, **Jack White**, **Red Hot Chili Peppers** and many more –

will hit Chicago's Grant Park for this year's Lollapalooza. Then, on August 10th, the Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival will take over San Francisco's Golden Gate Park with major acts including **Metallica**, **Neil Young and Crazy Horse**, **Stevie Wonder** and **Foo Fighters** – plus a foodie-friendly array of gourmet dining and wine options. “We just like being invited to parties – we’ll go to anything we get invited to,” says Keys frontman **Dan Auerbach**, who will head to Canada and Europe for more festival gigs after Lollapalooza. “Seriously, if you’re having a kegger after this, we’ll be there.”

Bruce Springsteen to rock stadiums this fall

The **E Street Band**'s **Wrecking Ball** tour – featuring the five-man **E Street Horns**,



with **Jake Clemons** replacing his late uncle **Clarence** on saxophone – will return stateside after hitting Europe this summer

for a run of football- and baseball-stadium dates. The tour's third leg kicks off August 18th at Boston's Gillette Stadium – including stops at Chicago's Wrigley Field on September 7th and three nights at the new MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, starting September 19th.

Bee Gee Robin Gibb hospitalized in coma

The Bee Gees singer, 62, entered a coma in a London hospital after contracting pneumonia in April. Gibb has battled liver and colon cancer



since 2010; his brother and bandmate **Maurice Gibb** died of complications after surgery for an

intestinal blockage in 2003. Bee Gee **Barry Gibb** flew to London from the U.S. to be at his ailing brother's side. Said Robin's wife, Dwina, “Barry was singing to him.”

Cleveland Rocks

(1) Clinton and Anthony Kiedis share a mic. (2) Tre Cool, Armstrong, Ad-Rock and Mike D backstage. (3) Robertson and Chris Rock. (4) Slash. (5) Darlene Love. (6) McCoy, Black Thought and Kid Rock honor the Beasties. (7) Wood, Flea and Armstrong tackle “Higher Ground.” (8) Bareilles sings Laura Nyro.

parts with an ease that explains why the Stones snatched him up. “You can’t play ‘Stay With Me’ halfheartedly,” says Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, who managed to play through a bad migraine before hitting the open bar. “You have to tell her, ‘Stay with me!’”

LL Cool J and Public Enemy's Chuck D inducted the Beastie Boys, who didn't perform – Adam “MCA” Yauch is battling cancer and couldn't attend. Instead, Travie McCoy, Kid Rock and Black Thought performed a Beasties medley with lovingly precise backing from the Roots and help from longtime Beasties DJ Mix Master Mike. Backstage, when the other two Beasties weren't joking about Axl's whereabouts (“What do you think he's doing right now? Watching *Game of Thrones*?”), pretending to be inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame or complaining about the omission of Kraftwerk, Devo and the B-52's, they became sincere when the sub-

ject turned to their missing comrade.

“Obviously, if we could trade anything, it would be to have Adam here with us,” Mike D said. “I think probably the most special thing about tonight, the thing we're the most thankful for, is the relationship the three of us have with each other.” In a letter that Ad-Rock read from the stage, Yauch wrote, “I'd like to dedicate this to my brothers Adam and Mike. They walked the globe with me. It's also

for anyone who has ever been touched by our band. This induction is as much ours as it is yours.” Yauch's parents were in attendance, and they joined the group for dinner beforehand.

Billy Gibbons and Dusty Hill of ZZ Top delivered the first induction speech of the evening, honoring late blues guitarist Freddie King – and then Gibbons, Joe Bonamassa and Derek Trucks gave a master class in King's revved-up Texas lead style, trading solo after burning-rubber solo on his “Hide Away” and “Going Down.” “I didn't know what to expect, but everything fell right into place,” said Trucks.

Wearing jeans rather than a tux, John Mellencamp inducted Donovan with an affectionate speech, citing him as a major influence. “I wouldn't just listen to Donovan,” he said. “I was stealing all my shit from Donovan.” Donovan read a short poem written for the occasion (“Honored am I,” he intoned, “to sing my song to a million fans”), then played a spare version of “Catch the Wind” and an upbeat “Sunshine Superman” before duetting with Mellencamp on “Season of the Witch.” Back-



Not Fade Away

(1) The Comets celebrate. (2) Mellencamp with his copy of Donovan's *Fairytale*. (3) Donovan with son Donovan Leitch. (4) Midler and Robinson. (5) Green Day kicked off the show with a surprise performance.

stage, Donovan offered some sincere, if immodest, advice: "If you're a young musician and looking for the way forward, one thing I'll tell you - study Donovan records."

The most emotional induction was also the most crowded: Smokey Robinson honored the elderly members of six backing groups - his own Miracles, the Blue Caps (who backed Gene Vincent), the Comets (Bill Haley), the Crickets (Buddy Holly), the Famous Flames (James Brown) and the Midnighters (Hank Ballard).

Midler teared up as she inducted Nyro, who died of ovarian cancer in 1997, and Sara Bareilles played a piano version of "Stoney End." "She was a complete original," said Midler, who celebrated Nyro's New York roots. "She embodies what we all want to be, if only we had the guts."

Carole King inducted the late exec Don Kirshner, who

was her boss and mentor during her days as a Brill Building songwriter, and Darlene Love honored Kirshner with "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," backed by Paul Shaffer and the Hall of Fame Orchestra. Later in the evening, Robertson presented the Award for Musical Excellence to Cosimo Matassa, Glyn Jones and Tom Dowd, and mentioned that he was thinking of his former bandmate Levon Helm, whom he knew was close to death.

Chris Rock's speech inducting the Chili Peppers was predictably hilarious, as he reminisced about seeing them for the first time. "I had never been to a white show before, so I thought all white groups put socks on their dicks," he said. "Years later, getting inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame - they have black ties on their dicks tonight!" He also touched on Rose's absence: "Even if he was coming

tonight, he wouldn't be here by now!"

The Chili Peppers made it clear that the honor didn't mean their career was ending - or that they would start wearing shirts. "I feel like we're just new-born," Flea said.

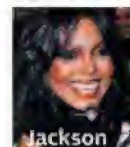
Afterward, many of the inductees gathered at the House of Blues or at a smaller, late-night affair hosted by Wenner at a downtown restaurant, where Green Day huddled together at the bar and Wood munched on giant shrimp while chatting with Slash and Alice Cooper ("There's a lot of miles on this group," Wood said as they posed for a picture). Van Zandt, Robertson and Midler relaxed at a table right by the restaurant's front windows - one last reminder to passing Clevelanders that the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was in town. 🐾

Additional reporting by Patrick Doyle and Andy Greene

IN THE NEWS

FCC takes Super Bowl fine to Supreme Court

The federal government has asked the Supreme Court to review the controversial legal case surrounding Janet



Jackson's
"wardrobe
malfunction"
at the 2004
Super Bowl.
The Federal
Communica-

tions Commission initially fined CBS \$550,000 for broadcasting a split-second image of Jackson's breast during her halftime performance with **Justin Timberlake**. Last fall, a federal appeals court overturned the fine, saying that the FCC had acted "arbitrarily and capriciously" – prompting the FCC's latest appeal. If the Supreme Court decides to hear this case, it likely would not reach the court until 2013.

Cohen's ex-manager sentenced to jail time

Leonard Cohen's former business manager and lover, Kelley Lynch, will serve 18 months behind bars, followed by five months of probation, for harassing the singer-songwriter. An L.A. court found Lynch guilty of sending Cohen a string of profanity-filled e-mails



Cohen

after he fired her in 2004 for embezzling millions of dollars. "It gives me no pleasure to see my onetime friend shackled to a chair in a court of law, her considerable gifts bent to the service of darkness, deceit and revenge," Cohen said in a statement.

Ted Nugent grilled on Obama threats

The Secret Service called the Detroit rocker in for questioning after he gave a heated anti-Obama speech at a National Rifle Association meeting in St. Louis, saying, "If Barack Obama becomes the president in November again, I will



Nugget

either be dead or in jail by this time next year." A Secret Service representative said the issue was considered resolved after two agents met with Nugent in Oklahoma. "Good, solid, professional meeting concluding that I have never made any threats of violence toward anyone," Nugent said. "The meeting could not have gone better."



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Radiohead, Dre Heat Up the Desert

Festival season kicks off with superstar DJs, indie icons and rap giants

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

WHAT THE FUCK IS up, Coachella?" shouted Tupac Shakur as he stood alongside Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre in the California desert on April 15th. Whispers of disbelief rippled through the 85,000-strong Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival crowd as the eerily realistic hologram launched into 1997's "Hail Mary" and traded verses with Snoop on 1996's "2 of Amerikaz Most Wanted." With flesh-and-blood cameos from Eminem, 50 Cent, Wiz Khalifa, Kendrick Lamar, Warren G and Kurupt, plus blazing versions of West Coast classics from "Nuthin' But a G Thang" to "Gin and Juice," Snoop and Dre's monster throwdown was the peak of the three-day fest. "The first time I saw it in rehearsals, I got chills," Warren G says. "Incredible."

Not that the rest of the weekend, which kicked off April 13th, didn't rock. The Black Keys topped the main-stage festivities on Night One with a lean, revved blast of blues rock. The next night, Radiohead exploded minds with spooky new grooves ("Identikit," "Lotus Flower"), towering versions of classics ("Karma Police," "Paranoid Android") and a mesmerizing light show. And at the end, it wasn't even over: For the first time, all the artists are back for another three-day blowout one week later.

"It's good," Florence Welch says. "If I really fuck up this time, there's next weekend."

All weekend, one of music's most colorful, cheerful and star-packed crowds – from rave kids and gossip-mag staples (hello, Lindsay!) to Paul McCartney – wandered the palm-studded, mountain-shaded Empire Polo Club. "It's like an Eagles album cover or something, minus the skull and Native Ameri-



California Love

Huge crowds watched Dr. Dre and Eminem (1) get an assist from a hologram Tupac (2). David Guetta (3) ruled the dance tent, where Rihanna and Katy Perry (4) later popped up during DJ Calvin Harris' set. Thom Yorke (5) and Florence Welch (6) both brought epic grandeur.



can headdress," says Keys frontman Dan Auerbach. "Although if you looked hard enough, you'd probably see that in the audience."

With 145 acts competing for attention across five stages – including

Aussie breakout Gotye, reggae hero Jimmy Cliff, reunited punks At the Drive-In and Odd Future R&B crooner Frank Ocean – bands dialed up the energy to hold a crowd. "Subtlety goes out the door," says St. Vincent's Annie Clark, who shredded through an intense Night Two set. "All of the quiet numbers, we're like, 'Nope.'"

Least subtle – and arguably most popular – of all? The Sahara dance tent, where major DJs including David Guetta, Avicii and Kaskade caused barely controlled pandemonium with apocalyptic kick drums and tingle-inducing synths. "Coachella is going to become more and more DJ-oriented – that's what the kids are into," says Guetta. "The energy in the dance tent is really insane."

For full coverage, go to rollingstone.com/coachella.



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TRIBUTE

Dick Clark, 'American Bandstand' Host, 82

The broadcast icon helped spread rock & roll from coast to coast

WITH HIS NEATLY combed hair and affable personality, Dick Clark – the *American Bandstand* host and TV icon who died April 18th of a heart attack in Los Angeles at 82 – never looked like a rocker. He didn't want to admit to his favorite music, calling it “nobody's damn business” when *ROLLING STONE* asked in 1990.

But Clark knew rock & roll and took it seriously, as Talking Heads learned when the band performed “Take Me to the River” on the show in 1979. “It was the first mainstream-TV exposure we had,” says drummer Chris Franz. “We'd all grown up watching it. It was an iconic program, and Dick Clark was an iconic personality.” Popping into the Heads' dressing room before the taping, Clark surprised the band by seeming familiar with songs like “Psycho Killer.” “He really did his research,” says Franz. “And while we were playing, he was standing off to the side, taking it all in.”

Clark's fascination with rock & roll – on both a musical and business level – helped make *American Bandstand* a land-



mark show. From the time he began hosting it in 1956 until he left in 1989, *Bandstand* brought rock – as well as disco, R&B and punk – into America's living rooms. The list of acts who appeared to lip-sync their latest hits reads like a virtual history of popular music – from Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry to the Beach Boys, the Doors, Prince, Madonna and even Public Image Ltd. “*Amer-*

ican Bandstand was the holy grail of television shows for any rock & roll artist at that time,” says Neil Diamond, who made his TV debut performing “Cherry, Cherry” on the show in 1966.

With Clark as its genial host, *Bandstand* was one of the first nationwide platforms for rock. “It was a unifying force,” says Connie Francis, whose 1958 single “Who's Sorry Now?” became a huge hit after Clark

played it on the show. “It set the trend in hairdos, clothes and dance steps, and Dick didn't talk down to teenagers. It was like *American Idol* is today.”

Born in 1929 in Bronxville, New York, Clark made his name as a TV and radio personality in central New York before becoming a DJ in Philadelphia. There, he also became the substitute host for *Bandstand*, then a local show. After its host, Bob Horn, was fired in 1956, Clark was promoted into Horn's job, and a year later, the show went national on ABC. “If he played a record on his show, we all knew we had to play it,” says famed Top 40 DJ “Cousin Brucie” Morrow.

When Clark stepped down from *Bandstand* in 1989, he continued building a media empire; his company produced the American Music Awards and the Academy of Country Music Awards, and Clark co-owned the United Stations Radio Networks. He suffered a stroke in 2004 that limited his appearances on one of his other major franchises, *New Year's Rockin' Eve*. But *American Bandstand* will remain Clark's signal contribution to rock culture. “There's no program in the history of TV like that,” he told *RS* in 1973. “And they all buy records.”

DAVID BROWNE

IN THE STUDIO

Magnetic Zeros Cut Warm, Harmony-Drenched LP

Inside the West Coast hippie crew's follow-up to its hit 2009 debut

“I've always wanted to do a double LP,” says Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros' frontman, Alex Ebert, over lunch at a natural-food market in Ojai, California. “My favorite Beatles album is the *White Album*.” After setting up camp in this tiny mountain-foothills town last October, the 10-member L.A. folk-pop crew recorded about 30 contenders for the follow-up to its sleeper-hit 2009 debut, *Up From Below*. The band ultimately

chose to make *Here* (due May 29th) a single nine-song LP, saving the best of the rest for a companion set later this year.

The Zeros have sold more than 300,000 copies of *Up From Below*, boosted by their decision to license the rootsy jam “Home” to high-profile TV ads. They've spent the past four years playing to growing crowds, including the ones on last year's Railroad Revival Tour with Mumford & Sons. Says Ebert, “I don't feel like I have anything to prove as much as I have something to share.”

Here came together faster than *Up From Below*, which they spent 18 months complet-



ing. “The songs sound fresher, because I didn't have as much time to polish some of them,”

until they mix and come back out as one sound. I've always been attracted to that.”

JENNY ELISCU

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The Malian rock duo's new LP is full of all-star collabs. Best of all? This liquid blues groove with a key assist from Brooklyn party-starter Santigold.



3 HOT CHIP "Night and Day"

The lead single from the U.K. dance outfit's latest album is a highly flammable dance-floor destroyer: all rubber-band bass, blippy-blорpy synths and breathy vocals about disco legends Zapp.



4 DJANGO DJANGO "WOR"

The Scottish psych-pop crew's debut bursts with nuggets that sound like everything from Talking Heads to the Hollies. Check out our current fave: the surf-flavored space odyssey "WOR."



5 MAROON 5 FEAT. WIZ KHALIFA "Payphone"

"Moves Like Jagger" still stuck in your head? Wash it right out with this equally catchy earworm, featuring a slick verse from Pittsburgh MC Wiz.

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Nate Ruess of fun.

The "We Are Young" singer on drinking too much, weird OCD rituals and the greatness of Wilco

By Austin Scaggs

THE THEATRICAL NEW YORK POP-ROCK CREW fun. has scored one of 2012's hugest smashes with the crazy-catchy single "We Are Young" – lodged at the top of the charts for six weeks and counting. For singer Nate Ruess, who formed fun. in 2008 after spending most of his twenties fronting Arizona alt-rock act the Format, the band's current run of sold-out shows has been a long time coming. "It's pretty insane," says Ruess, 30, checking in before a gig in Omaha, Nebraska. "I knew how touring was for 10 years, but it's completely different now that things are popping off. I don't play an instrument – I just write in my head, and I usually hear fully formed songs. 'We Are Young' turned out so much like it was in my head. But it also exceeded all my expectations."

Your uncle, John Ruess, acted in musicals. What's he like?

He's a real dreamboat. We'd see him tour through Phoenix, doing *The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber* or *Show Boat*. When he did *Les Misérables* in Chicago, when I was 10, I fell asleep – my attention span was really shitty back then. Did he teach you about life on the road?

I always saw him pounding water, so that's a ritual of mine. I have this weird thing where I wake up three times a night to go to the bathroom, and I have to count backward from 20 before I finish peeing. Then I go to the sink and count backward from 20 and drink for 20 seconds out of the faucet.

So, you're totally OCD.

People always have to sit on my right-hand side. But, no, I'm just as weird as anybody else. Everybody's fucking weird.

Do you drink much before shows?

I've turned it into a schedule. I drink one or two shots of whiskey 30 minutes before we go onstage. Then there's a nice break in the set where we play acoustic and I have another shot. After the show, I should

stop, but I'm all jacked up, so I usually have one more glass of whiskey. Then I turn into what everybody refers to as Dr. Midnight. Dr. Midnight has no dietary restrictions. All fucking hell breaks loose.

The song "Some Nights" talks about sleeplessness. Are you more creative late at night?

For this album, yeah. I wasn't finding much inspiration during the day, but when I'd wake up to pee, I'd have ideas. My girlfriend would be sleeping, so I'd turn the faucet on loud and sing into my phone. The next morning, it would sound like some freaky lullaby. That was where a lot of the writing started for the album.

You have a girlfriend? I thought your song "It Gets Better" was about growing up as a gay kid.

No, I'm not gay. You're a terrible Sherlock Holmes. That song is just about losing your virginity.

How did you write "We Are Young"?

The lyrics came after my worst drinking night of all time. Have you ever been kicked out of a cab for puking all over the place? I have. The cabbie was demanding all this money, and all I could do was stand on the corner with my head against the wall. It took me another day before I was a functioning adult and could actually write down the verses.

Kanye West's pal Jeff Bhasker produced the new album. How did you make that happen?

He'd blown me off twice, so I didn't think it was going to happen. When we finally met, I was pretty inebriated. I was like, "Fuck it, I'm going to sing him this chorus." So I sang "We Are Young" – this thing that had been in my head for a week – and he straight-up freaked out. The next day, we got into the studio.

I hear you're a huge Wilco fan. What do they mean to you?

When their documentary, *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*, came out, I was about 20. I'd just made a major-label album and no one was responding to it. I was so depressed. That movie taught me you can make music you want to make, and people will come around. We self-released the next Format album in 2006, and it ended up selling 85,000 copies.

One of your old bands was called Nevergonnascore. How long did it actually take you to get laid?

[Laughs] I think I was 15. But don't mix that up with being cool.



A MARTIN SCORSESE PICTURE GEORGE HARRISON LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

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REBEL YELL
Church onstage
in New York

Boozin' and Cruisin' With Country's Rowdiest Star

Eric Church loves Bruce, Jack Daniel's and rocking arenas to the ground
By Patrick Doyle

ON A HOT APRIL AFTERNOON in Nashville, Eric Church rolls his four-wheeler down a ramp from his black Chevy Silverado and slips on camouflage boots and a belt containing a knife and a pistol. "This is a .40-cal, and it's all business," he says in a heavy North Carolina twang as he cocks the gun. "It's for the rattlesnakes." If you're bit, is it all over? "You have a chance," he says, cracking a devilish grin. "But we'd have to move it along."

Church, 34, purchased these 700 sprawling acres in January. At its highest point, the property overlooks Kenny Chesney's old place. The land is Church's reward for a monster year—the country singer's third LP, *Chief*, debuted at Number One in July and has scored two hit singles: "Drink in My Hand," an after-work anthem rich in Stones-y swagger, and "Spring-

steen," a sweet, nostalgic tribute to one of Church's favorite songwriters. This summer he'll even bring his arena-rock-inspired live spectacle to Metallica's Orion Festival in Asbury Park, New Jersey. "We're probably gonna get killed, but I'm looking forward to it," he says. "It makes us a little different."

Church's bandmates, a tattooed crew who look more like Sunset Strip metalheads than Nashville pros, ride up on rented four-wheelers. After minimal instructions from the

"Let's go look for rattlesnakes," Church says, holding his gun and a beer.

singer ("Fuckin' helmets? Seriously?"), he leads the band on a rowdy afternoon blazing through winding trails, stopping occasionally to crack a new Miller Lite. "Let's go look for some rattlesnakes," he says late in the afternoon, wandering

down a hill to a creek bed. With gun ready and beer in hand, a misstep sends him tumbling backward onto his ass. When he emerges from the creek, he's covered in tiny ticks. "You saved your beer," says a bandmate, picking ticks off him. "And with a loaded gun," Church says, smiling. "That takes talent."

Church has plans to build a house, a barn and a 50-acre lake for fishing. His other recent splurge: a big Airstream trailer so he can take his wife, Katherine, and newborn son, Boone McCoy, on the road when he headlines his first arena tour, which will total 90 dates this year.

Earlier in the day, Church drove through suburban Nashville, arriving at the home studio of producer Jay Joyce, where the duo cut Church's past three records. Joyce shows the singer a photo of a church he's considering buying to convert into a bigger studio. "I don't want anything to fucking change," Church says. "Jay was talking about quit-

ting smoking, and I said, 'Don't fucking quit smoking. Nothing can change.'" One wall is covered with shiny vintage guitars, including an old Harmony and a beautiful dark-red Gretsch Country Gentleman. "I played it on the record," Church says. "I said to Jay, 'If this goes double-platinum, you owe me that Gretsch,' and he agreed. I wish I'd said platinum. I figured out today that you're 512,000 records away from owing me that."

Church grew up in the small manufacturing town of Granite Falls, North Carolina. His dad was a furniture salesman, his mom a schoolteacher. In high school he played basketball, football, baseball and even golf until a knee injury his sophomore year derailed his plans to play college football. Instead, he dived into country and roots music, becoming obsessed with Kris Kristofferson and the Band. He attended North Carolina's Appalachian State University and majored in marketing, which may explain his fixation on demographics and sales numbers. When manager John Peets arrives on Church's land and tells him he's close to the number of tickets Metallica sold at Nashville's Bridgestone stadium, Church replies, "Tell them I want their number. I gotta beat it by one. I'll buy the tickets myself."

He's even figured out how to make some money off his prodigious boozing. Church and his crew drink so much Jack Daniel's that the company makes him his own bottles with a medallion of his face, and he sells autographed empties at his merch stand at shows for \$200 each. "When I'm on the road, drinking is part of my game," he says. "It's not something that I run away from."

In college, Church formed the Mountain Boys, who played covers in bars five nights a week. After graduating, he moved to Nashville, taking a night-shift job working the phone for Shop at Home Network while struggling as a songwriter during the day. He had minor success; Canadian country singer Terri Clark cut his rocker "The World Needs a Drink," which peaked at Number 26. "It got to a point where it was

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kind of a joke," says Church. "Everybody that cut my songs would put the song out and it would just die."

At 24, he scored a meeting with Nashville heavyweight Arthur Buenahora, a publisher at Sony Music who also signed Taylor Swift and Miranda Lambert. Church played him "Lightning," a ballad he wrote after watching the movie *The Green Mile*. "The hairs on my arms were standing up," says Buenahora. "Our format tries to paint these perfect Norman Rockwell pictures of stuff. Eric was missing that part of it, but there was something more real about it."

Buenahora set him up with Joyce, who helped drench Church's sound in sprawling arrangements, with drum loops, distorted banjos and heavy rock guitars. "I don't really know how to make traditional country music," says Joyce. "I'm just looking at it more from a rock perspective - What can I do to that banjo to make it sound cool?"

Things got off to a slow start: Church's first LP, 2006's *Sinners Like Me*, flopped, and he was kicked off a tour opening for Rascal Flatts in 2006 for playing longer than his allotted set time. "We've never been a good opening act," Church says. "The whole thing was fucked up. I knew we were getting fired, and the last thing I said before we walked off the stage was 'I'll be back.' I intend to be back, and I'm gonna sell one more ticket than they did."

Taylor Swift replaced Church on the Flatts tour, an early breakthrough for the young singer. To thank Church, she sent him her first gold record. "She signed it 'Eric, thanks for playing too long and too loud on the Flatts tour, I sincerely appreciate it,'" he says. "It's awesome. I have it in my office."

Church wasn't able to book another major tour for four years. "The word got around that we were trouble," he says. The band hit rock clubs and state fairs, where Church remembers sending out his gui-

tarist, Driver Williams, to play Pantera instrumentals before their set to clear out older fans. "It didn't interest me to play for people who were 80 years old," he says flatly. "They'll be dead soon anyway. By the time you come back on tour and play again, they'll be gone."

By 2010, Church was getting booked for tours with Miranda Lambert and Toby Keith -

the crowd. It makes it better for me. I'm pretty pissed when I go out there. In a good way."

The show is a pyro-heavy arena spectacle: Church rises from below the stage in a haze of smoke playing "Country Music Jesus," which begs for a "long-haired hippie prophet preaching from the book of Johnny Cash" to save the genre. During "Smoke a Little Smoke,"

In a genre where artists tend to be happy self-promoters, Church can seem prickly. "He's probably one of the most misunderstood guys in our format because he's really the kind of guy you'd want to be buddies with," says Buenahora. "You'd want your sister to marry a guy like that. But I promise you if he went up there and tried to hug everybody and smile

and shake everyone's hand, it wouldn't be right. Eric is just Eric. What he does best is write songs and goes out and plays."

One of Church's major pet peeves is aggressive security; he punched a guard at a recent show for hassling fans. "I watched these people, and they weren't misbehaving, it wasn't unsafe, it wasn't anything like that," he says. "You just had a guy on a power trip. I got ahold of him

- two of them, actually. It was fun for the fans probably. I checked YouTube the next day. I couldn't find anything on it. I figured there'd be something."

Driving through Nashville, Church speculates about why his brand of country is connecting with rock fans. "Rock & roll has been very emo or whatever the fuck," he says. "It's very hipster. We played Lollapalooza and I was stunned at how pussy 90 percent of those bands were. Nobody's loud. It's all very fuckin' Peter, Paul and Mary shit."

He also takes issue with music's current star-making machine. "It's become *American Idol* gone mad," he says. "Honestly, if Blake Shelton and Cee Lo Green fucking turn around in a red chair, you got a deal? That's crazy. I don't know what would make an artist do that. You're not an artist." Cruising down a suburban road, Church raises his voice as he becomes genuinely angry. "If I was concerned about my legacy, there's no fucking way I would ever sit there [and be a reality-show judge]. Once your career becomes about something other than the music, then that's what it is. I'll never make that mistake. I don't care if I fucking starve."



RIDING DIRTY Church (pictured above with producer Joyce) cruises his Nashville property on his ATV.

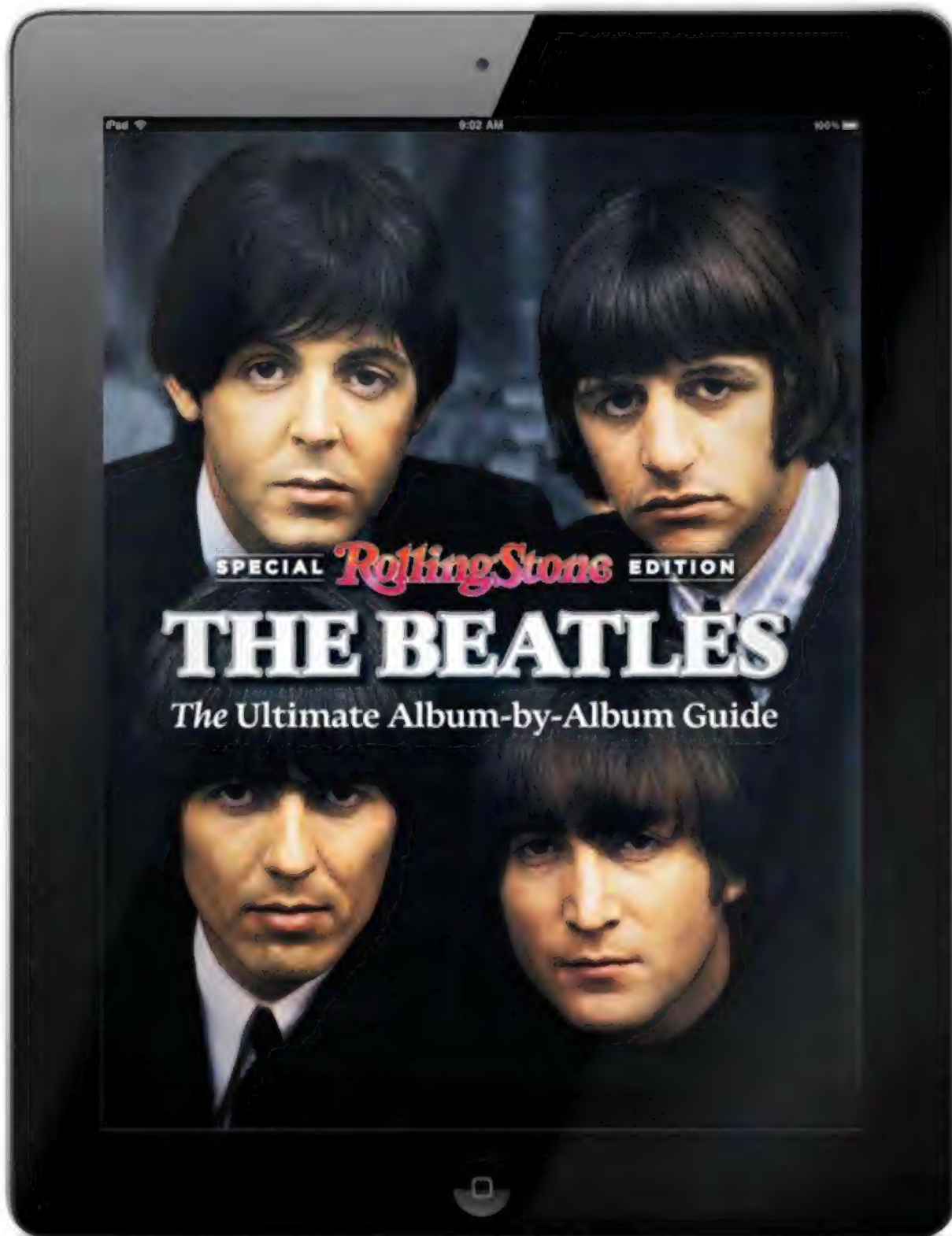


"If Blake Shelton and Cee Lo turn around, you got a deal? That's crazy."

and now he's a major headliner of his own. A few weeks before the ATV adventure, Church is sitting in a New York restaurant drinking a Jack and Diet Coke before a sold-out show at the Hammerstein Ballroom. "There was a time there when a lot of the people were having Number One songs and we were kicking their asses on the road," he says. "It put a chip on our shoulder. It's still there for me. I go on that stage tonight and it'll be a boulder out there. I think it makes it better for

Williams and bassist Lee Hendricks gather center stage while fog billows from their guitars. The show is also heavy on crowd participation: During "These Boots," fans raise their cowboy boots in the air and throw them on the stage. "When I walk on-stage, I have an agenda," Church says. "I'm not fucking around. When we go out there, I want to be the act that, no matter who's in that crowd, they've never seen a better act than me. I'm gonna empty the tank."

After the show, Church has a meet-and-greet scheduled in what his publicist calls the "Shot Room," where he takes a shot of Jack with the assembled guests each night. Church stumbles in, shakes a few hands - a Fox News producer and a couple whose son in the military is a fan - but he makes a quick exit, out in less than 10 minutes. "I don't like the fame element," he says. "I don't understand it. It's like all of a sudden I'm a big deal and people want to take pictures. I'd much rather not ever be noticed except for a show. That would be fantastic."



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THE LAST LAUGH?
Chase is embroiled in
a war with the creator
of *Community*.

The Passion of Chevy

The feud between Chevy Chase and 'Community' is the latest bizarre chapter in Chase's long and perplexing career **By Rob Sheffield**

IS THIS THE END OF Chevy? People have been asking this question for as long as Chevy Chase has been around. Even when he was burning through his one and only season on *Saturday Night*

Community

Thursdays, 8 p.m., NBC

Live, they were doing gags about how the rest of the cast despised him. And now he's raging his way out of *Community* in a blaze of bilious glory, declaring, "It's just a fucking mediocre sitcom! I want people to laugh, and this isn't funny."

But this is more than just another star-versus-show controversy: It's the Passion of the Chevy, what could be the last act in one of the weirdest and most perplexing careers in the history of American comedy — the one that started in the Seventies with "I'm Chevy Chase, and you're not."

Chevy helped create the exploded-context irony-bludgeoning cut-and-paste pop world where *Community* takes place, yet he's an outcast from his own tribe. He never seemed to fit in with the ensemble, and

it was a running joke from the start that no one could abide him. *Community* is about misfits who hang out together because nobody else can stand them — and yet Chevy is the one even *they* can't stand.

Chevy has been a doddering Clark Griswold figure for so long, it's easy to forget that, for a moment there, he was the funniest guy on the planet. He was the advance agent for the 1970s *SNL-National Lampoon* revolution. Not as a clueless-dad figure, but as a cold-livered bitch out for revenge on the world.

It's shocking to look back and see how intense he was. There's one Weekend Update where he reports on a new character in Charles Schulz's comic *Peanuts*, home of Snoopy and Woodstock. Chevy says, "According to Schulz, he will replace Woodstock with a bird named Altamont, who will beat the other birds to death with a pool cue."

Chevy delivers the line with a flicker of sadistic pleasure, as if to say, "Yeah, I did that." Dan Aykroyd couldn't have sold that joke, and neither could have Jane Curtin or Bill Murray. They were too hung up on warmth and humanity. Chevy's affably cynical voice-

of-authority deadpan was what put all that shock humor across.

For the madman-hipster geniuses of the 1970s comedy revolution, Chevy was the perfect instrument. They couldn't have changed the world without their smoothie frontman, but he didn't make a lot of friends. When *National Lampoon* co-founder Doug Kenney died tragically in 1980, falling off a cliff in Hawaii, *SNL* writer Michael O'Donoghue said, "Too bad he wasn't shaking hands with Chevy when it happened."

Yet Chevy has never really cared about burnishing his image. He should have spent his glory years on *SNL*, but he didn't. He should have been Otter in *Animal House*, but he wasn't. He should have taken over for Johnny Carson, but he didn't. And he should have whiled away his golden years breezing through *Community*. But he won't. He never got many lines, and he always came off as a pain in everyone's ass. But isn't that why they hired him? You don't hire Altamont and then ask him to be Woodstock.

Chevy never fit in on *Community* — but then, he never fit in anywhere. He was always too prickly and headstrong to have a midlife attack of the cuddlies like Murray. He's held true to the role he staked out in the 1970s, as the great American anti-social crank. What's brilliant about *Community* — its gawky, earnest, we-accept-you warmth — is the exact opposite of what's brilliant about Chevy.

Community is my favorite show, and he's been my least favorite character on it. But doesn't every community have one of those? Isn't every human collective stuck with a Chevy, whether it's a family or a bunch of fictional characters you watch every week and adopt as your imaginary friends? Damn straight. Nobody but Chevy could have played this role, because nobody else is so perfect at symbolizing the impossibility of joining a community. But that's his greatness, as well as his curse. He's Chevy Chase, and nobody else is. **CS**

SHORT TAKE

Holmes 2.0

Masterpiece's Sherlock
Sunday, May 6th, 9 p.m., PBS

The BBC's *Sherlock* stars the perfectly named Benedict Cumberbatch as the world's favorite psycho-genius detective, solving crimes in present-day London. This *Sherlock* diagnoses himself as a "high-functioning sociopath," and that's putting it mildly. He's the kind of gentleman sleuth who's as creepy as the villains he chases. And since times have changed, he uses a cellphone, rocks a nicotine patch and gets pinned down



Watson (Martin Freeman)
and Holmes (Cumberbatch)

by dominatrixes. We've been flooded with Sherlock Holmes knockoffs — all those *Mentalists*, *Monks* and *Houses* using their OCD to solve mysteries. But as Cumberbatch proves, the original is still the greatest. **R.S.**

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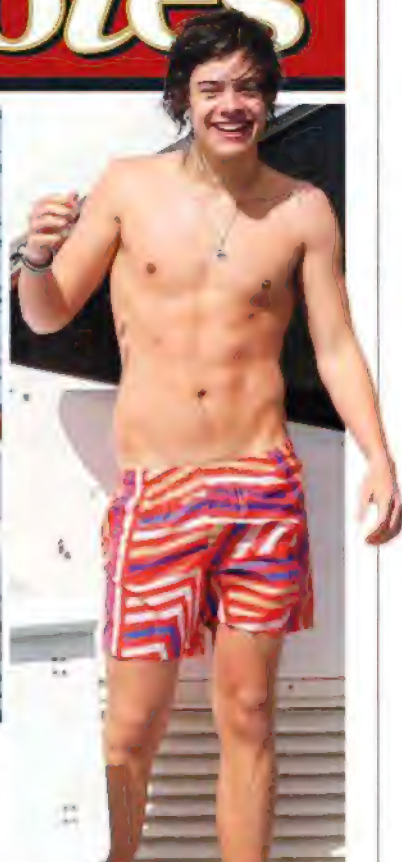
"Just watched *Benjamin Button* for the first time, and I cried on the airplane." —Skrillex

Random Notes

No Direction Home



Zayn Malik, Tomlinson and Harry Styles (from left) sip and chill: Right: Styles' abs of steel.



"Being in Australia keeps getting better and better," said One Direction's Louis Tomlinson on their Brisbane tour stop. He wasn't kidding: When the lads landed Down Under, they were mobbed by teddy-bear-toting tweens at the Sydney airport. They managed to sneak away on a yacht and spent the day swimming, flashing their abs and sipping brewskis in Sydney Harbor. The boys just announced a massive U.S. tour (summer 2013!) — they'll need a few fake IDs to keep the party going.

RED ROCKER

Big-air badass Shaun White paced the streets of New York with an ax to grind.



HOLDING COURT
LMFAO's Redfoo took a break from party rocking to show off his killer volley in Moscow.



99 PROBLEMS (BUT A BEACH AIN'T ONE)
Jay-Z searched for the rhyme in the coconut, chilling with Beyoncé on the sands of St. Bart's.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GREY WASH/BLUE WASH/SP/ASH NEWS; INFPHOTO.COM; SRDJAN STEVANOVIC/GETTY IMAGES; TRB/PAL/FAMELYNET PICTURES; CLAUDIO RODRIGUEZ/FAMELYNET PICTURES

Depp pauses midsong to gaze at his dark master.



Friend of the Devil

At *Revolver* magazine's annual Golden Gods Awards in L.A. on April 11th, Marilyn Manson was joined by friend Johnny Depp, who busted out tasty licks on "The Beautiful People" and Eurythmics' "Sweet Dreams." Captain Jack also makes an appearance on Manson's new disc, *Born Villain*, playing several instruments on an aggro cover of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain." It turns out the pair are bros from way back: "I was on *21 Jump Street* when I was 19," Manson tells *Rolling Stone*. "I was an extra. If you pause the episode, you can see me running my hand through my mullet." Note: YouTube that!



Dave and the family Guetta prove they're everyday people.

Daddy Was a DJ

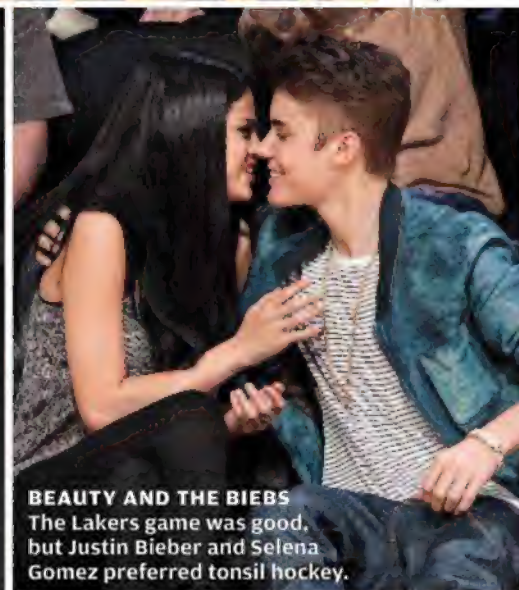
Super DJ David Guetta drew one of the most unhinged crowds of Coachella's opening weekend. "I love the challenge of playing for rock fans," he tells *RS*. A few days later, he took a low-key trip to L.A.'s Grove mall with his wife and their lil' trippers.



ARTFUL DODGERS
The Beach Boys harmonized on the national anthem and "Surfer Girl" on Opening Day at Dodger Stadium.



SWEET CHILD
Denim fanatics Axl Rose and Lana Del Rey got caught sneaking out of L.A.'s Chateau Marmont.



BEAUTY AND THE BIEBS
The Lakers game was good, but Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez preferred tonsil hockey.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHELSEA LAUREN/WIREIMAGE; MARK SULLIVAN/WIREIMAGE; NOEL VASQUEZ/GETTY IMAGES; JOSEPHINE SANTOS/PACIFICCOASTNEWS.COM; VPA/ANM GSI



Samsung WB150F and Samsung DV300F

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From Arkansas to Big Pink:
The deep roots, hard times and quiet
redemption of an American original

By MIKAL GILMORE

LEVON HELM

1940-2012

HE WAS THE SOLE AMERICAN-BORN VOICE in a fellowship that set out to discover – to imagine redeeming – what was left of America’s promise, in a time when few knew whether discovery or redemption was any longer possible. Drummer and singer Levon Helm was perhaps the purest product of that fellowship, the Canadian-rooted rock & roll quintet the Band. The group came to fame after an eventful association with Bob Dylan in the mid-1960s; by the time the decade was out, the Band were making music that subverted the revolutionary intentions of rock & roll with an unanticipated revolution all their own.

When the Band played live, Helm located his drums at center stage, between guitarist Robbie Robertson and bassist Rick Danko, just a little behind, at the same level, not on a riser. The idea was for them all – along with pianist and singer Richard Manuel and keyboardist Garth Hudson – to press on into risky territory with shared grace and nerve. That drum stool, Helm noted in his 1993 autobiography, *This Wheel’s on Fire*, “was the best seat in the house. From there you can see both the audi-

ence and the show.” Helm aimed to keep faith with that dream of communion, right to the end of his days.

BORN IN TURKEY SCRATCH, Arkansas – a rural village in the Mississippi Delta – on May 26th, 1940, Helm grew up in a family that worked long days in dry and dusty heat. His parents were cotton farmers who encouraged their children to sing and play

instruments. When Levon, at age six, saw Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys, he grew determined to make himself a musician. He began playing guitar when he was eight, and soon took to the drums. He heard country music and R&B on radio stations that beamed out of Nashville, and was fascinated by the blues harmonica of Sonny Boy Williamson II, whose *King Biscuit Time* was broadcast in Helena, Arkansas. Most of all, Helm remembered a bawdy act with a hardback beat known as the F.S. Walcott Rabbits Foot Minstrels, who held raunchy Midnight Ramble events on Saturday nights. “Today, when folks ask me where rock & roll came from,” Helm said, “I always think of our Southern medicine shows and that wild Midnight Ramble. Chuck Berry’s duckwalk, Elvis Presley’s rockabilly gyrations, Little Richard’s dancing on the piano, Jerry Lee Lewis’ antics and Ronnie Hawkins’ camel walk could have come right off F.S. Walcott’s stage.”

By the time he was 17, Helm was playing in rock & roll bands at clubs in Helena. He came to the attention of fellow Arkansan Ronnie Hawkins, who sought



ENDLESS HIGHWAY

Helm in Woodstock, 1969: "The Catskills reminded me of the Arkansas hill country. I had a shock of recognition. Going to Woodstock felt like going home."

Helm out at his parents' house. Helm was stunned by the rockabilly singer's huge pompadour. "I like that hairdo," Helm told Hawkins. "Why, thanks, son," Hawkins replied. "I call it the Big Dick look." Hawkins invited the young player to join him in Toronto to drum for his band, the Hawks. "I thought I'd died and gone to heaven," Helm later wrote. One night, a 14-year-old boy named Robbie Robertson caught Hawkins and his band live; he was riveted by Helm. "You couldn't believe this kid was the drummer, and yet he was terrific, terrific to

look at and terrific to hear," Robertson later said.

By moving to Canada, Helm had abdicated any real chance for American rock & roll success, but he liked where he was. "The Hawk had been to college and could quote Shakespeare when he was in the mood," Helm later wrote. "He was also the most vulgar and outrageous rockabilly character I've ever met in my life. He'd say and do anything to shock you." On one occasion, Hawkins asked the teenage Helm, "You ever fuck a goat?" Helm admitted that

he had not. "Well," Hawkins continued, "I have – good pussy too. Only problem is you have to stop and walk around to the front when you want to kiss them."

Others came and went in the Hawks, but Helm stayed. In the early 1960s, other Ontarians joined: Robertson – the son of a Jewish gangster who had met with a violent death – Danko, Manuel and Hudson. As time went along, Helm would listen steadily to drummers such as Earl Palmer and the great Louis Hayes. Helm later told drummer Max Weinberg that by listening to such players, he learned "you're supposed to dance the beat along." It was an apt description of Helm's unique style; he played in motile gestures, with graceful pulls of his arms and shoulders that could pivot in a moment, punctuating and commenting on what was transpiring while also pushing into the rhythm.

The early 1960s were exciting years for the young members of the Hawks, both musically – they were making sharp-edged rock & roll and R&B sounds, at the same time that artists like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were percolating – and in other ways. Hawkins talked about visits he and Helm made together during tours of the South, in West Helena, to a woman he called Odessa. "Levon was always the best fucker," Hawkins said. "I remember with Odessa that Levon would go first, and when I went in she would say, 'Mr. Ronnie, you can go ahead, but I think Mr. Levon has gone and taken it all.'"

Robertson was the first to begin to feel the limitations of Hawkins' show style – the mohair stage suits they wore, the kick steps to the beat they sometimes had to perform. "That shit started to embarrass me," he said. In 1963, Robertson asked Helm, "Do we really need Ronnie?" Later that year they struck out on their own. Since Helm had been in the group the longest, the band formed itself as Levon and the Hawks. They would stay on the bar circuit for months to come, in both Canada and the American South, and they shared some rare experiences – playing late into the night with Williamson, the blues singer and harmonica player, Helm's idol, in West Helena, shortly before the bluesman died in 1965. But they also sometimes resorted to stealing food from markets to feed themselves.

The band was considering returning to its Canadian home when a friend who was working with New York manager Albert Grossman called Helm and asked if the Hawks would be willing to support Bob Dylan, who had recently gone electric on his hit single "Like

a Rolling Stone" and at his infamous Newport Folk Festival performance. Helm wasn't particularly surprised that Dylan had heard about them. "Truth was," he said, "the Hawks were the band to know back then. It was an 'underground' thing.... We were like a state secret among hip musical people because nobody else was as tight as we were." Before joining Dylan onstage at his August 28th, 1965, show at Forest Hills Tennis Stadium in Queens, the singer told Helm, Robertson and his other accompanists, "Just keep playing, no matter how weird it gets." Fights were breaking out between fans and detractors in the audience, Helm recalled: "People were being thrown out. People were cursing, but not at Bob. They were mad at us, the band. People were throwing fruit at us."

For Helm, life with Dylan became complicated and troubling: "I began to think it was a ridiculous way of making a living - flying to concerts in Bob's 13-seat Lodestar, jumping in and out of limousines, and then getting booed.... It was getting really strange." In late November, at the end of the tour's first U.S. phase, Helm felt he had taken as much of the frantic pace and abuses as he could abide, and gave notice. "I want to draw a line for myself," he told Robertson. "This stuff is too damn powerful for me."

In the seasons that followed - while Dylan and the rest of the Hawks made their notorious 1966 tour of England - Helm spent time working on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. "At nights we played cards and listened to the radio," remembered Helm. "'Rainy Day Women 12 and 35' was a big hit. It was real funny to hear it and wonder who was playing the drums and how everybody was getting along."

IN JULY 1966, DYLAN SUFFERED a motorcycle accident, and ended up with a concussion and broken vertebrae of the neck. He retreated to his home in Woodstock, New York, with his wife and children, and invited the Hawks. After Danko called Helm and told him that a major recording contract was in the offing for the group, the drummer rejoined them. When Helm arrived on the scene in late 1967, "I could barely believe the level of work they'd been putting out," he wrote. "The boys had also discovered how to write songs." Part of that body of work - stream-of-consciousness apoc-

Contributing editor MIKAL GILMORE wrote about David Bowie in RS 1149.



Country Boy

(1) Helm (left) with the Hawks in 1958. (2) Helm with the Band at Big Pink in 1968. (3) Playing the Midnight Ramble at his Woodstock barn for his birthday bash in 2008.



rypha such as "This Wheel's on Fire" and strange, funny parables such as "Clothes Line Saga" - was released as *The Basement Tapes*, credited to Dylan and the Band.

Woodstock - a rustic mix of New York City and country, redneck and counterculture - was the perfect setting for the Hawks, and Helm in particular. "You'd see them at the hardware store, or drinking beer with firemen," remembers one local. "They lit up the town." "From that first day, the Catskills reminded me of the Ozarks and the Arkansas hill country," Helm would later write. "I had a shock of recognition. Going to Woodstock felt like going home."

In 1968, Dylan returned to his official recording career with *John Wesley Harding*. The Hawks declined to re-

cord with him; it was time for the group - which took on the name the Band - to make its own move. In 1968, the Band released *Music From Big Pink*, and it was in that album that the legacy of the basement sessions found its greatest fruition. These were songs about either a lost America - not just musically, but also spiritually - and about people who needed to find something, maybe hope, maybe mourning, maybe companions, to withstand that loss. Perhaps the best example of Robertson's gift in this regard was "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," from 1969's *The Band*, about the pain and the scars that the Civil War still leaves on the American soul. Helm sang it from the vantage of a broken Confederate at the tail end of the conflict, in a mix of ache, pride, defeat and grudge. The effect of

the Band's music ran deep: The Rolling Stones and the Beatles abandoned baroque arrangements for music with taut rhythms and lean embellishments; Eric Clapton left behind Cream's avant-garde pyrotechnics; and the Grateful Dead emulated both the Band's themes and styles in *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*.

BUT AT THE HEIGHT OF their influence, the Band began to fall apart. Helm, among others in the group, had developed a heroin habit. "I'd feel hypocritical about soft-peddling this," Helm wrote in his autobiography, "because it was part of the scene and part of the era." As Robertson became an increasingly dominant force in the band—writing most of the music and determining the thematic gist of the albums—ties between the members began to strain. Helm accused Robertson of assuming song credits wholesale, and ignoring what he saw as the Band's crucial collaborative aspect. Helm told Robertson, "Robbie, a band has to stick together, protect each other, support and encourage each other, and grow the music the way a farmer grows his crops."

For a moment, in early 1974, it looked as if the decline might turn around. Dylan decided to end his eight-year sabbatical from concert appearances, taking the Band along with him in an ambitious and sweeping trek across America. The shows provided some of Dylan's fiercest performances ever. "With Dylan," Greil Marcus wrote, "they were once again the best rock & roll band in the world."

A little over two years later, Robertson, fed up with the touring and partying, brought it all to a halt. He announced that the Band would be playing their last shows—at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco on Thanksgiving night in November 1976—and recruited director Martin Scorsese to chronicle the event for a feature film, *The Last Waltz*.

"The only problem was," Helm recalled, "I didn't want any part of it. I didn't want to break up the Band." In a confrontation over the matter, Helm told Robertson, "I'm not in it for my health. I'm a musician, and I wanna live the way I do." Robertson said, "I'm tired of the danger out there. How long before the odds run out? How long before someone dies? It's a done deal." Helm was furious: "I'll fight you tooth and nail just to feel better about it."

The rancor persisted for a longer life than the group's teamwork. In 2000, Helm told ROLLING STONE, "What was that movie? Just a lot of self-serving tripe.... Robertson had something to prove. He wanted to show that he was the leader of the Band, and that's what that movie is about.... I've never gotten a check for it in my life."

Helm went back to the life of an itinerant musician, and met with praise for his portrayal of country singer Loretta Lynn's father in Michael Apted's *Coal Miner's Daughter*, and for his roles as the narrator and sidekick Jack Ridley in *The Right Stuff*. In 1983, Helm wanted to arrange a reunion tour of the Band, but Robertson would have nothing to do with it. Helm pushed ahead regardless, and he, Danko, Manuel and Hudson re-formed the Band, with guitar-

"I didn't want to break up the Band," Helm said. "I'm not in it for my health. I'm a musician."

ist Earl Cate, appearing at festivals and touring sporadically. The enterprise also exposed them to the sort of hazardous odds that Robertson had cited as reason to end the group. Early in the morning on March 4th, 1986, Richard Manuel, drunk and on coke, went into the bathroom of his Florida hotel room and hanged himself. His wife, Arlie, found him the next afternoon; Helm and Danko helped cut the body down.

The Band would continue, recording three albums, including 1993's excellent *Jericho*. Then, in 1998, Helm was diagnosed with throat cancer. He nonetheless continued to record a new Band album, *Jubilation*, and also worked with his daughter, singer Amy Helm. "When I got my diagnosis.... it scared the hell out of me," he told Scott Spencer in an April 2000 ROLLING STONE article. "But thank God for my baby. I didn't want her to see me so scared, so I acted like I wasn't."

He remained adamant in his denunciations of Robbie Robertson. In 1994, when the Band were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Helm had

refused to attend rather than spend time in his former friend and partner's company. "Robbie's got people who'll say he wrote everything," he told writer Barney Hoskyns in 1998. "Those are the same people that are helping him spend the fucking money, but he knows it ain't right, it ain't fucking true." Robertson was unmoved by the claims. "I wrote songs before I ever met Levon," he told Spencer. "I'm sorry, I just worked harder than anybody else. Somebody has to lead the charge, somebody has to draw the map. The guys were responsible for the arrangements, but that's what a band is, that's your fucking job."

On December 10th, 1999, Rick Danko died in his sleep, at age 56. After Robertson appeared at the memorial service for Danko in Woodstock, Helm wouldn't enter.

IN 2000, HELM DIDN'T KNOW IF he'd ever sing again. He believed maybe he'd handed that gift off to Amy. "When I sing," she once said, "I can hear where he'd go. I'm listening to his secret voice, and it's guiding me."

It turned out that Helm wasn't done with his own voice. He endured nearly 30 radiation treatments for his throat cancer in his last decade, and his vocal cords gradually improved. To rebuild his finances after the treatments, he returned to the stage. ("Two things people don't want—poverty and cancer," he told Spencer, "and I had them both.") This time he would let fans come to him, turning a barn on his property into a makeshift live venue that hosted more than 150 sweaty, joyous Saturday-night shows, which he called *Midnight Rambles*. In that barn and at accompanying tour dates, he reconstructed a life of music and friendship, drawing in a wide range of notable artists such as Elvis Costello, Buddy Miller, My Morning Jacket and Sheryl Crow. "Every song is a celebration," Helm said in 2008. "We've got so many great singers and players—that's what's so fun. We can go to the Beacon Theatre and play, but it just don't sound as good as this old barn."

In his last years, Helm made the best albums he had ever made under his own name, *Dirt Farmer* (2008), *Electric Dirt* (2009) and *Ramble at the Ryman* (2011). There were no burdens of proof remaining for him, no myths to be staked. He stood justified in his own heart, in his own life, in his own house. **2**

READY *for the* FIGHT

In a rare Oval Office interview,
President Obama discusses his job,
the opposition and the coming campaign

By JANN S. WENNER

Photograph by MARK SELIGER

WE ARRIVED AT THE WHITE House on Easter Monday, the South Lawn overrun by children and their parents enjoying the annual Easter Egg Roll. This was the fourth time in the past four years that we had sat down for an extensive interview with Barack Obama, but the tenor and timing were markedly different than the previous conversations. This time he was focused on the campaign, his thinking dominated by the upcoming battle for a second term.

The president was more somber than in our past interviews – and less inclined to depart from the handful of themes he had been concentrating on in recent weeks. He avoided discussing Mitt Romney, even when asked a direct question, and focused primarily on the very real constraints he operates under as president,

from the intransigence of Congress to the dilemma of America's anti-drug laws. He also seemed intent on summing up the arguments he'll soon be taking out on the campaign trail, making clear that he plans to run on his remarkable record of accomplishments: extending health insurance to 32 million Americans, staving off a major economic collapse, rescuing the auto industry, reforming student loans, ending discrimination against gay soldiers, pulling U.S. troops out of Iraq, killing Osama bin Laden, and passing one of the largest middle-class tax cuts in history.

The hourlong discussion was the longest and most substantive interview the president has granted in over a year. When executive editor Eric Bates and I joined him in the Oval Office, he began by signaling his staff to push back his schedule. "Just call Secretary Clinton's office and tell her we're going to be about 10 minutes late," he said.



President
Obama in the
Oval Office on
April 9th, 2012



"I'M A BETTER PRESIDENT NOW"
Obama at the annual Easter Egg Roll, on the morning of the RS interview.

"Twenty minutes," I suggested.

"Fifteen," he said with mock sternness.

Later, after the interview ended, we found Hillary sitting in a small chair, scrunched between the desk of Obama's secretary and the door to the Oval Office. The two former rivals now seem completely at ease with each other. Clinton joked about the popularity of the fake Tumblr site *Texts From Hillary Clinton*, and Obama began to air-thumb an imaginary text. "See, I'm hip," he said with a laugh.

The president even made light of his campaign-season caution. Having complimented me during our last interview on my brightly colored socks, he instantly guessed the gift we had brought him: two pairs of socks, one salmon with pink squares, the other with black and pink stripes. "These are nice," the president said. Then he considered the color scheme. "These may be second-term socks."

Let's talk about the campaign. Given all we've heard about and learned during the GOP primaries, what's your take on the state of the Republican Party, and what do you think they stand for?

First of all, I think it's important to distinguish between Republican politicians and people around the country

who consider themselves Republicans. I don't think there's been a huge change in the country. If you talk to a lot of Republicans, they'd like to see us balance the budget, but in a balanced way. A lot of them are concerned about jobs and economic growth and favor market-based solutions, but they don't think we should be getting rid of every regulation on the books. There are a lot of Republican voters out there who are frustrated with Wall Street and think that they acted irresponsibly and should be held to account, so they don't want to roll back regulations on Wall Street.

But what's happened, I think, in the Republican caucus in Congress, and what clearly happened with respect to Republican candidates, was a shift to an agenda that is far out of the mainstream – and, in fact, is contrary to a lot of Republican precepts. I said recently that Ronald Reagan couldn't get through a Republican primary today, and I genuinely think that's true. You have every candidate on-stage during one of the primary debates rejecting a deficit-reduction plan that involved \$10 in cuts for every \$1 of revenue increases. You have a Republican front-runner who rejects the Dream Act, which would help young people who, through no fault of their own, are undocumented, but who have, for all intents and purposes,

been raised as Americans. You've got a Republican Congress whose centerpiece, when it comes to economic development, is getting rid of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Doesn't all of that kind of talk and behavior during the primaries define the party and what they stand for?

I think it's fair to say that this has become the way that the Republican political class and activists define themselves. Think about John McCain, who obviously I have profound differences with. Here's a guy who not only believed in climate change, but co-sponsored a cap-and-trade bill that got 43 votes in the Senate just a few years ago, somebody who thought banning torture was the right thing to do, somebody who co-sponsored immigration reform with Ted Kennedy. That's the most recent Republican candidate, and that gives you some sense of how profoundly that party has shifted.

Given all that, what do you think the general election is going to look like, and what do you think of Mitt Romney?

I think the general election will be as sharp a contrast between the two parties as we've seen in a generation. You have a Republican Party, and a presumptive Republican nominee, that believes in drastically rolling back environmental regulations, that believes in drastically

rolling back collective-bargaining rights, that believes in an approach to deficit reduction in which taxes are cut further for the wealthiest Americans, and spending cuts are entirely borne by things like education or basic research or care for the vulnerable. All this will be presumably written into their platform and reflected in their convention. I don't think that their nominee is going to be able to suddenly say, "Everything I've said for the last six months, I didn't mean." I'm assuming that he meant it. When you're running for president, people are paying attention to what you're saying.

How does that shape the tone and tenor of the debate that's going to take place during the campaign?

I actually think it will be a useful debate, and one that I look forward to. I think that the American people are going to be listening very intently to who's got a vision for how we move this country forward.

Their vision is that if there's a sliver of folks doing well at the top who are unencumbered by any regulatory restraints whatsoever, that the nation will grow and prosperity will trickle down. The chal-

In working with the Republicans in this term, it seems clear that the traditional rules of give-and-take politics have changed—that the Republicans have been playing a "lose-lose" game with you. What's your relationship with the GOP leadership at this point? A little frosty?

It's not frosty. This isn't personal. When John Boehner and I sit down, I enjoy a conversation with him. I don't think he's a bad person. I think he's patriotic. I think that the Republicans up on the Hill care about this country, but they have a very ideologically rigid view of how to move this country forward, and a lot of how they approach issues is defined by "Will this help us defeat the president?" as opposed to "Will this move the country forward?"

Is there any way to break through that obstructionism by Republicans?

My hope is that if the American people send a message to them that's consistent with the fact that Congress is polling at 13 percent right now, and they suffer some losses in this next election, that there's going to be some self-reflection going on—that it might break the fever. They might say to themselves, "You know what, we've

suggests that they haven't isn't paying attention or is trying to make a rhetorical point. Because we all see it every day, and me being in this Oval Office is a testimony to changes that have been taking place.

When I travel around the country, a lot of people remark on how inspiring seeing an African-American president or an African-American first lady must be to black boys and girls, how it must raise their sense of what's possible in their own lives. That's hugely important—but you shouldn't also underestimate the fact that there are a whole bunch of little white girls and white boys all across the country who just take it for granted that there's an African-American president. That's the president they're growing up with, and that's changing attitudes.

My view on race has always been that it's complicated. It's not just a matter of head—it's a matter of heart. It's about interactions. What happens in the workplace, in schools, on sports fields, and through music and culture shapes racial attitudes as much as any legislation that's passed. I do believe that we're making slow and steady progress. When I talk to Malia and Sasha, the world they're growing up with, with their friends, is just very different from the world that you and I grew up with.

You've shied away from demanding marriage equality for all. Are you at least willing to say that you support it on a personal level?

I'm not going to make news in this publication. I've made clear that the issue of fairness and justice and equality for the LGBT community is very important to me. And I haven't just talked about it, I've acted on it. You'll recall that the last time you and I had an interview, we were getting beat up about "don't ask, don't tell" in the LGBT community. There was skepticism: "Why's it taking so long? Why doesn't he just do it through executive order?" I described very specifically the process we were going to go through to make sure that there was a buy-in from the military, up and down the chain of command, so that it would be executed in an effective way. And lo and behold, here we are, and it got done.

Ending "don't ask, don't tell" has been the dog that didn't bark. You haven't read a single story about problems in our military as a consequence of the ending of the policy. So whether it's on that, or changing the AIDS travel ban, or hospital visitation rights, or a whole slew of regulations that have made sure that federal workers are treated fairly in the workplace, we've shown the commitment that I have to these issues. And we're going to keep on working in very practical ways to make sure that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are treated as what they are—full-fledged members of the American family.

ON MITT ROMNEY

"I don't think that their nominee is going to be able to suddenly say, 'Everything I've said for the last six months, I didn't mean.'"

lenge that they're going to have is: We tried it. From 2000 to 2008, that was the agenda. It wasn't like we have to engage in some theoretical debate—we've got evidence of how it worked out. It did not work out well, and I think the American people understand that.

Now, the burden on me is going to be to describe for the American people how the progress we've made over the past three years, if sustained, will actually lead to the kind of economic security that they're looking for. There's understandable skepticism, because things are still tough out there. You still have an unemployment rate that's way too high, you have folks whose homes are underwater because the housing bubble burst, people are still feeling the pinch from high gas prices. The fact of the matter is that times are still tough for too many people, and the recovery is still not as robust as we'd like, and that's what will make it a close election. It's not because the other side has a particularly persuasive theory in terms of how they're going to move this country forward.

lost our way here. We need to refocus on trying to get things done for the American people."

Frankly, I know that there are good, decent Republicans on Capitol Hill who, in a different environment, would welcome the capacity to work with me. But right now, in an atmosphere in which folks like Rush Limbaugh and Grover Norquist are defining what it means to be a true conservative, they are lying low. My hope is that after this next election, they'll feel a little more liberated to go out and say, "Let's redirect the Republican Party back to those traditions in which a Dwight Eisenhower can build an interstate highway system."

Do you think racial politics and race relations in America are any different now than when you first took office?

Look, race has been one of the fault lines in American culture and American politics from the start. I never bought into the notion that by electing me, somehow we were entering into a post-racial period. On the other hand, I've seen in my own lifetime how racial attitudes have changed and improved, and anybody who

Let me ask you about the War on Drugs. You vowed in 2008, when you were running for election, that you would not "use Justice Department resources to try and circumvent state laws about medical marijuana." Yet we just ran a story that shows your administration is launching more raids on medical pot than the Bush administration did. What's up with that?

Here's what's up: What I specifically said was that we were not going to prioritize prosecutions of persons who are using medical marijuana. I never made a commitment that somehow we were going to give carte blanche to large-scale producers and operators of marijuana – and the reason is, because it's against federal law. I can't nullify congressional law. I can't ask the Justice Department to say, "Ignore completely a federal law that's on the books." What I can say is, "Use your prosecutorial discretion and properly prioritize your resources to go after things that

criminal laws as a tool to deal with this issue. I think that's an appropriate debate that we should have.

Occupy Wall Street seems to have influenced your rhetoric. Has it had a deeper impact on your thinking about America?

You know, I think that Occupy Wall Street was just one vivid expression of a broader anxiety that has been around in the United States for at least a decade or more. People have a sense the game is rigged, so just a few people can do well, and everybody else is left to scramble to get by.

The free market is the greatest generator of wealth in history. I'm a firm believer in the free market, and the capacity of Americans to start a business, pursue their dreams and strike it rich. But when you look at the history of how we became an economic superpower, that rugged individualism and private-sector dynamism was always coupled with government cre-

ment is part of the problem, but essentially that government is the entire problem. These guys, they don't just want to roll back the New Deal – in some cases, they want to go back even further.

In regard to Wall Street, people are watching how the Justice Department has treated big players in the financial crisis, like Goldman Sachs, and saying, "Nobody's been put on trial." Other than some con men like Bernie Madoff and some insider trading, there hasn't been a single criminal prosecution of any of the individuals who actually made the decisions that wrecked the global economy. Despite all the fraud and manipulation, why is nobody on trial?

First of all, we're a nation of laws. So in some cases, really irresponsible practices that hurt a lot of people might not have been technically against the law. They might have been the wrong thing to do, but prosecutors are required to actually build cases based on what the law is. That's part of the reason we've passed Wall Street reform: to make much clearer what is prohibited and what is not, to set up rules and regulations that say, "You can't do this, and if you do it, there are going to be consequences."

Now, that isn't to say that there may not be more wrongdoing out there. One of the things people have not been clear about, for example, is this recent housing settlement. It was based on banks violating civil laws with those auto-penning of foreclosures, and it was narrowly drawn so that banks have to put up billions of dollars to help families who have been affected, but it still leaves in place the possibility of prosecution. It doesn't provide any criminal immunity whatsoever. We've set up a task force not just with the federal government, but with state attorney generals, that as we speak are actively going through all the records, issuing subpoenas. They will, on the basis of law, make determinations as to whether there are prosecutions out there.

So you think there's still a possibility of criminal prosecution.

I think there's still possibilities of criminal prosecutions. But what I've instructed the attorney general to do is to follow the evidence and follow the law. That's how our system works.

What is very relevant, I think, is that you have a Republican Congress, and Republican candidates for president, who have actively stated that they want to roll back the financial regulations that have been put in place. They want to eliminate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which is one more example of how they have drifted off of what had traditionally been bipartisan ideas. The notion that we would roll back an agency whose sole purpose is to make sure that consumers of financial products aren't defrauded,



are really doing folks damage." As a consequence, there haven't been prosecutions of users of marijuana for medical purposes.

The only tension that's come up – and this gets hyped up a lot – is a murky area where you have large-scale, commercial operations that may supply medical marijuana users, but in some cases may also be supplying recreational users. In that situation, we put the Justice Department in a very difficult place if we're telling them, "This is supposed to be against the law, but we want you to turn the other way." That's not something we're going to do.

I do think it's important and useful to have a broader debate about our drug laws. One of the things we've done over the past three years was to make a sensible change when it came to the disparity in sentencing between crack cocaine and powder cocaine. We've had a discussion about how to focus on treatment, taking a public-health approach to drugs and lessening the overwhelming emphasis on

ating a platform so that everybody could succeed, so that consumers weren't taken advantage of, so that the byproducts of capitalism, like pollution or worker injuries, were regulated. Creating that social safety net has not made us weaker – it's made us stronger. It liberated people to say, "I can move to another state, but if I don't find a job right away, my kids aren't going to go hungry. I can start a business, but if it doesn't work out, I'm going to be able to land on my feet." Making those kinds of commitments to each other – to create safety nets, to invest in infrastructure and schools and basic research – is just like our collective investment in national security or fire departments or police. It has facilitated the kind of risk-taking that has made our economy so dynamic. This is what it means for us to live in a thriving, modern democracy.

One of the major arguments we'll be having in this election season is a contrasting vision that says not just that govern-

aren't tricked, aren't duped, and that will somehow make our economy stronger – after everything we've been through, that makes absolutely no sense.

James Hansen, NASA's leading climate scientist, has said this about the Keystone pipeline: that if the pipeline goes through and we burn tar sands in Canada, it's "game over" for the planet. What's your reaction to that statement?

James Hansen is a scientist who has done an enormous amount not only to understand climate change, but also to help publicize the issue. I have the utmost respect for scientists. But it's important to understand that Canada is going to be moving forward with tar sands, regardless of what we do. That's their national policy, they're pursuing it. With respect to Keystone, my goal has been to have an honest process, and I have adamantly objected to Congress trying to circumvent a process that was well-established not just under Democratic administrations, but also under Republican administrations.

The reason that Keystone got so much attention is not because that particular

my belief that we're going to have to take further steps to deal with climate change in a serious way. That there's a way to do it that is entirely compatible with strong economic growth and job creation – that taking steps, for example, to retrofit buildings all across America with existing technologies will reduce our power usage by 15 or 20 percent. That's an achievable goal, and we should be getting started now.

You came into office as a young president with no military experience. Can you tell us a bit about your experience with overseeing the Pentagon and how you've grown as commander in chief, how your leadership style has evolved?

I came in without having served in the military, but feeling a great reverence for our military, and in awe of the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform make every single day. In the first year, the Pentagon had grown accustomed to basically setting the terms – not just tactics, but also strategy. There was some sense that we had a lot of hammers, so everything was a nail. In part because of really good work by Bob Gates, who I kept on as

were able to arrive at an approach that has resulted in handing over to the Iraqis a country, a democracy, that allows them now to determine their own fate, and we're going through that same process now with respect to Afghanistan.

Let me ask you about the Middle East in general. Outside of Iraq, there seems to be more turmoil than ever – in Syria, Israel, Iran. What's your take on the region and the strategic challenges it poses?

What we've seen over the past year and a half is as significant a set of changes as we've seen since the Berlin Wall fell. I think the jury's still out in terms of how it unfolds. On the one hand, I'm very proud that we stood with the people of Tunisia when they aspired to democracy. I'm very proud of the fact that we stood with the people of Egypt and said that it would be unacceptable, from our perspective, to see all those tens of thousands of people in Tahrir Square subjected to violence, and that it was time to transition to democracy. I believe we did the right thing with respect to Libya, in a very surgical way, avoiding a potential massacre.

But what is also true is that these are countries that don't have deep democratic traditions. Because of repression, in part, the only organizing principle in these societies is religious, and there are sectarian divisions that date back hundreds, in some cases thousands, of years. As these transitions take place, democracy can easily turn to demagoguery, to civil strife. So it is going to be a bumpy road, and a challenging time. I think the American approach has to be to uphold core principles of universal rights, freedom and democracy. We're also going to have to show some humility, in the sense that we're not going to be able to completely impose our own vision on these countries.

How do you strike that balance?

What I've made very clear to the entire region is we have some core interests that we're going to protect, making sure that we don't have terrorists who are launching attacks against U.S. persons or interests for our homeland, and that's something that we're going to continue to pursue. We're going to make sure that friends of ours in a region like Israel aren't vulnerable to attack. But when we look back 20 or 30 years from now, we want to make sure that we were on the side of freedom and equality and justice. We're not going to always get it perfectly right, and there are going to be times when we're frustrated, because for all our good intentions, people still use anti-Americanism as an easy political tool to get the streets riled up.

The biggest worry I have in the region is actually economic. When you think about those young people in Tahrir Square, more than anything what they want is the same thing that people all around the world want. They want opportunity, they

ON WALL STREET

"The recent housing settlement doesn't provide any criminal immunity whatsoever. I think there's still possibilities of criminal prosecutions."

pipeline is a make-or-break issue for climate change, but because those who have looked at the science of climate change are scared and concerned about a general lack of sufficient movement to deal with the problem. Frankly, I'm deeply concerned that internationally, we have not made as much progress as we need to make. Within the constraints of this Congress, we've tried to do a whole range of things, administratively, that are making a difference – doubling fuel-efficiency standards on cars is going to take a whole lot of carbon out of our atmosphere. We're going to continue to push on energy efficiency, and renewable energy standards, and the promotion of green energy. But there is no doubt that we have a lot more work to do.

Part of the challenge over these past three years has been that people's number-one priority is finding a job and paying the mortgage and dealing with high gas prices. In that environment, it's been easy for the other side to pour millions of dollars into a campaign to debunk climate-change science. I suspect that over the next six months, this is going to be a debate that will become part of the campaign, and I will be very clear in voicing

secretary of defense, and in part because of me really trying to engage and listen to the Joint Chiefs and have a frank and open and honest discussion, even when we had strong disagreements, they developed a sense that I care about our military – but that I very much believe in civilian control of our military, and that military decisions are in service of strategies and broader conceptions of diplomacy that are made here in this White House. And so I can say, with a lot of confidence, that at this point the relationship between me and the Pentagon is very good. I think they know I care about them and I respect them, and I think they respect me and listen to what I say. They understand that I'm the commander in chief.

The bin Laden raid was just one very dramatic expression of a very effective and constructive relationship that's developed, and our drawdown in Iraq is another good example. Iraq, obviously, still has challenges. I came in and I promised that I would end the war in Iraq in a responsible way, and we executed that plan. It wasn't as fast as some people would have liked. It was probably faster than some folks in the Pentagon would have liked. But we



"I CAN SING"
Obama jams with
B.B. King at the
White House on
February 21st.

want the ability to get an education, get a job, raise a family. But this huge youth bulge that has taken place in North Africa and the Middle East demands that the region integrate itself with the world economy, to upgrade the skills of its population – including half its population of women, who too often are locked out of any participation in the economy. They have to start making things and designing things and selling things other than oil. If they don't move fast enough on that front, then that will make the project that much more difficult.

What about the two biggest concerns at the moment, Syria and Iran?

The ongoing massacre of civilians in Syria is an example where the international community has to speak out forcefully. There are no easy answers in terms of us putting a stop to these killings, but we have to apply every bit of pressure we can to effectuate a peaceful, or at least more peaceful, transition to a legitimate government inside of Syria.

As for Iran, I came into office in 2009 saying, "Let's see if we can end 30 years of mistrust between the United States and Iran." That outstretched hand was rebuffed, in part, because Iran embarked on repression of its own people after the elections in 2009, and they continue to pursue a nuclear program that nobody in the international community believes is simply for peaceful purposes. So we have another

round of talks taking place between Iran and the P5-plus-1 – we just announced them today. There is a window of opportunity to resolve this issue diplomatically, and that is my fervent preference. There's no reason why Iran shouldn't be able to rejoin the community of nations and prosper. They have incredibly talented and sophisticated people there. But this continuing pursuit of nuclear weapons capability continues to be a major challenge, and it's going to be consuming a lot of my time and energy over the next several months.

You've been in office three years now. What's the world's hardest job like on a day-to-day basis?

Like every other job, you have good days and bad days. Like every other job, if you're willing to be self-critical and you're putting your all into it, you get better at it over time. I think I'm a better president now than when I first came into office. I think that my team is more efficient and can see around corners better than we could when we first came into office. As several people have pointed out to me who have been in previous administrations, this is a hard job, period. It's a really hard job when you're in the middle of the worst financial crisis in your lifetime, and two wars at the same time, and major challenges involving terrorism and climate change.

And everybody telling you how bad you're doing every day.

You end up having a very thick skin. I entered here with a thick skin, and now my skin is even thicker. Part of what you understand is that you are a person, but you're also a symbol. If things are going wrong, then people are looking to you to fix them. And sometimes, if you're just frustrated in your efforts, you're going to be the object of their frustration. You don't take it personally – you just recognize that it goes with the office and the desk and Marine One and all the other aspects of being president.

I heard you liked the TV show "Homeland."

I did, it was a great show.

In the show, a drone strike destroys a madrasa and provokes an assassination attempt on the vice president of the United States. What did you enjoy about it?

What I liked was just real complicated characters. Obviously, there's a lot of overdramatization of what our days are like around here day to day, and how our national security apparatus works. But the characters involved are not simple, black-and-white characters. It's a terrific psychological study, and that's what I enjoy about it.

What other TV shows or movies or music have you been enjoying?

I haven't had a chance to see a lot of movies lately. I think the last movie I saw was *The Descendants*, which was fun, because it was going home. I saw Clooney the

other day, and I joked to him that those were all my old haunting grounds. It actually captured that part of Hawaii that's not just rainbows and sunsets.

What do you read regularly to keep you informed or provide you with perspectives beyond the inner circle of your advisers?

[Laughs] Other than *ROLLING STONE*? That goes without saying.

I don't watch a lot of TV news. I don't watch cable at all. I like *The Daily Show*, so sometimes if I'm home late at night, I'll catch snippets of that. I think Jon Stewart's brilliant. It's amazing to me the degree to which he's able to cut through a bunch of the nonsense – for young people in particular, where I think he ends up having more credibility than a lot of more conventional news programs do.

I spend a lot of time just reading reports, studies, briefing books, intelligence assessments.

Newspapers?

I'll thumb through all the major papers in the morning. I'll read the *Times* and *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*, just to catch up.

Do you read Paul Krugman?

I read all of the *New York Times* columnists. Krugman's obviously one of the smartest economic reporters out there, but I also read some of the conservative columnists, just to get a sense of where those arguments are going. There are a handful of blogs, Andrew Sullivan's on the

Apollo. I wanted to hear Al Green. The guys who were working the soundboard in the back, a couple of real good guys, they say, "Oh, man, you missed the Reverend, but he was terrific, he was in rare form." So I was frustrated by that. Since I was on my fifth event and had been yakking away for several hours on all kinds of policy stuff, I just kind of broke into a rendition of "Let's Stay Together." And they're like, "Oh, so the president, you can sing, man. You should do that onstage." [Senior adviser] Valerie Jarrett was with us, and she was like [whispers, making a slashing motion across his throat], "No, no...." I said, "Yeah, I'll do that. You don't think I can do that onstage?" I looked at [press secretary] Jay Carney, and he was tired too, and he said, "Yeah, go for it." So I went up there and we did it.

I can sing. I wasn't worried about being able to hit those notes.

We've talked in the past about how you've met Bob Dylan and Paul McCartney here in the White House. Now you've met Mick Jagger. Tell us a bit about that.

The performances were terrific that night. But what was really fun about it was the rehearsal the day before. Part of what I really enjoy watching, any time I see these rehearsals, is how generous the big-name guys are with all the musicians involved. Once they get onstage, they don't have the entourage, all the trappings – they're just one more musi-

men that most of these folks have ever met, like Howlin' Wolf and the rest of the crew at Chess and B.B. King, who was performing that night. Mick said how much he appreciated their generosity – teaching the Stones what they knew about music, even though these kids were like something arriving from another planet. The sense of him wanting to do that same thing, that it all comes full circle.

He told me that the night before, you came down to the rehearsal and hung out quite a bit.

Yeah, I was down there for probably about 45 minutes. It was great fun, just watching them work through stuff. And he had unbelievable energy. I tell you, that guy, when he performed the next night, he was as energized as he's ever been.


Did you know you were going on to sing "Sweet Home Chicago" that night?

I was actually trying to avoid singing. The only problem with my Apollo performance is that everywhere I go now, somebody wants me to sing. My whole point is that the fewer the performances, the higher the ticket price, so you don't want to overdo it.

It must help to get a break, though, given how stressful and demanding the job is.

You generally don't hear in the press about what goes right, but you do hear it from the people who were impacted by it. I tell you, not a day passes where somewhere, somehow, I don't hear about something we've done that's really touched somebody directly. Somebody writes and says, "I'm 25 years old, and because of health care reform, I was able to stay on my parents' plan and ended up getting a checkup, and it turned out that I had a tumor and it was caught early, and I just want you to know that treatment is going well, and I really think this health care bill saved my life." Or you're in a rope line and somebody says, "I know you've been criticized because a lot of folks have had their homes foreclosed on, but your housing program actually helped me stay in my home, and it's made all the difference in the world."

There's an incredible generosity and recognition from people that these are tough times. It reminds you of what an incredible privilege it is to occupy this office. You're touching people on a day-to-day basis, and sometimes you don't even know it.

My hair is grayer, and obviously you get dinged up and bruised in this job. But my confidence in the American people is stronger than it was when I came into office, and my determination to do right by them and make sure that every morning, I wake up trying to figure out, "How do I improve their prospects?" That determination burns brighter than it did back in 2008. 

ON HIS APOLLO GIG

"The only problem is that everywhere I go now, somebody wants me to sing. My whole point is that the fewer the performances, the higher the ticket price, so you don't want to overdo it."

Daily Beast being an example, that combine thoughtful analysis with a sampling of lots of essays that are out there. *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic* still do terrific work. Every once in a while, I sneak in a novel or a nonfiction book.

I thought you were going to say "Playboy."

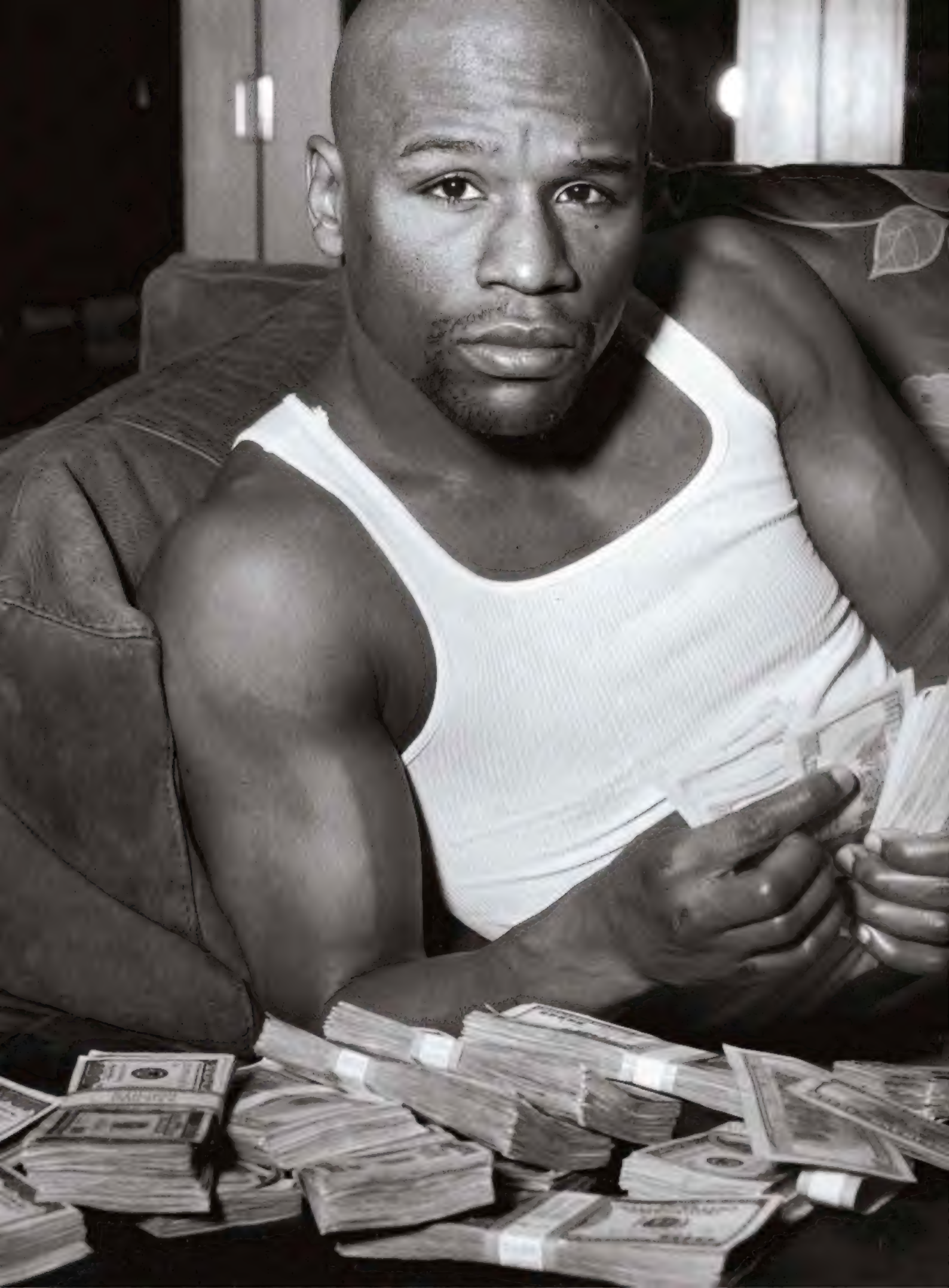
No [laughs].

Most people, when you ask them to sing in public, get kind of nervous about it – they don't really want to do it. But you got up there at the Apollo Theater and nailed Al Green. What was going through your head when they asked you to do it? Did you know you were going to nail it?

The truth is, here's exactly what happened. It was my fifth event of the day. It's about 10:30 at night, and we go up to the

ceian, and they're up there, practicing. I saw that when McCartney was here, I saw that when Stevie [Wonder] was here, Herbie Hancock. Mick was the same way. It was really nice to watch him just try to work through these numbers with the house band and a couple of guys who were with him who were obviously far less famous and about half his age, or maybe even less than half his age. But he was treating them with respect and caring about the music.

The next day, the evening of the performance, Mick gets up there and says, "Part of what makes this night special is I remember when me and the rest of the Stones traveled to Chess Records." They're in the middle of the South Side of Chicago, and they're probably the first English-





THE WORLD ★★ ACCORDING TO ★★ MONEY

THE **GREATEST** FIGHTER OF HIS GENERATION,
FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.
LIVES LOUDER & LARGER THAN ANY MAN IN AMERICA—
SO WHY IS HE SO PISSED OFF?

★★★★ BY **PAUL SOLOTAROFF** ★★★★★

YOU CAN GET A LOT DONE IN LIFE IF YOU DON'T WASTE the hours between midnight and sunup on something as shiftless as sleep. Floyd Mayweather Jr. knocks off more before dawn than most of us do in a month of Mondays, and has seven boxing titles, more than \$200 million in earnings and a half-dozen busts for battery and harassment to prove it beyond dispute. His perpetual motor, rare as it is, goes by lots of names. In a warrior, you'd call it tenacity; in a corporate banker, ruthlessness. In Mayweather, it's the thing we call character. The man can't stop and won't stop. Now or ever. ★ Today, for instance, has been a 20-hour bear, and Mayweather is just getting loose. His morning began at 1 a.m., when the undefeated champ in five different divisions slipped out of his suite at Manhattan's Four Seasons, climbed into the first of a fleet of Es-

PHOTOGRAPH BY **MARK SELIGER** ★★★ **51**

calade limos, carrying his trainer, manager and 12-man crew, and sparred for two hours at a dingy gym in Brownsville, Brooklyn. He backed that up with a 4 a.m. run down Fifth Avenue, then returned to his rooms, ate a greasy meal and cavorted with his boys till well past dawn.

At noon, he was out the door again, decked in diamonds, for a press conference at the Apollo Theater, where 4,000 fans showed up in a fury to heckle Mayweather and his close friend 50 Cent, while cheering Miguel Cotto, the game-but-overmatched superwelterweight he'll fight in Las Vegas on May 5th. Mayweather, formerly Pretty Boy but known now as Money, grinned and blew kisses to the largely Hispanic crowd; he heard nothing but the sound of checks clearing. Come fight night, he'll make approximately \$40 million, then prime the pump in his post-bout comments for the payday to end all paydays: his long-delayed superfight with Manny Pacquiao, the one fighter in the world with a puncher's chance to beat him and shut his mouth. It's a match that, presuming it finally comes to pass, will net him something like \$80 million, more if he plays his cards right.

From the Apollo, his cortege tore through red lights and traffic, late for a midtown taping with Bob Costas. Mayweather arrived in uneven humor, loath to parry questions about Pacquiao and eager to park himself in front of a flatscreen TV and watch the Duke-Wake Forest game he had bet a pile on. The interview with Costas was a testy draw. Money doesn't need him to sell his fights – that's what Twitter (2.6 million followers), Facebook (1.3 million friends) and his website are for – any more than he needs sponsors like Nike or Schick to pad his income in the ring. He earns \$100,000 just for strutting through a nightclub and throwing a stack of twenties at the crowd, and he strings dozens of such appearances back to back, sometimes two per night. He has spent most of the six months since his knockout of Victor Ortiz, in fact, touring the globe in a pair of leased Gulfstreams, hopping from Las Vegas to party palaces in the usual meccas: Hollywood and London, Atlanta and South Beach, where he recently bought a seaside spread. At each of these stops, people compete to do him favors, providing limos, suites and spike-heeled women to everyone in his growing entourage. What Drake, in short, raps about, Mayweather lives. He's a rock star who happens to box two months a year.

After Costas, there's a jaunt to the Diamond District, where Money has bought several of the diamond ensembles (watch, pendant, ring, bracelet) that he's never seen without when in public. Next, he's off

to his 5 p.m. flight to L.A. Running around the airport to hand hundred-dollar bills to each of the several porters hoisting his luggage, he's needling 50 Cent about the day's achievements ("I can say I've played the Apollo now. Can you?"), execrating Costas for his rat-a-tat questions ("Little bitch thought he had me cornered"), and crowing to his boys about Duke's easy cover in the first half at Wake Forest ("I'm in the check-cashing business!"). Days later, he'd bet a million on Duke – and lose. Aboard the plane now, gobbling Twizzlers and swigging cans of sweetened tea, he runs up and down the aisle post-takeoff, cracking jokes, doing voices and talking shit. "Yo, what I told y'all about Jeremy Lin? He played with them big dogs and got bit!" (On Twitter, Money had tweaked the Asian supernova for being a media creation, starting a predictable – and premeditated – firestorm. Then Lin played the Miami Heat and was hounded off the court by its superstars, which Money and crew relished from front-row seats.) "Black players can't say what they feel about him – they got contracts and morals clauses. Me, I say what the fuck I want. I ain't got no contracts. I'm a big boss man – the boss of the bosses!"

This leads to an antic riff about gaming the press: getting ESPN to hand him free airtime by spouting wild things before a fight and boasting that he personally got HBO "paid" by creating its popular series *24/7*. "They didn't even want it when I went to them, told me, 'Which idiot's gonna watch two boxers talking?' I said, 'Trust me, they will, if I'm one of the boxers talking. I'll make it the hottest show you got' – and did. Five times."

In the course of his hourlong, breathless stand-up, a lovely, flame-haired flight attendant weaves past Money in the narrow aisle, trying very hard to be unobtrusive. Still, she can't pass without stares or comments from the large men seated

behind him, some of whom address her as "Mrs. Mayweather" as she bends to scoop their empty drinks. Rather than quell this, Money takes the bait and follows her through the portal to the forecabin. Perhaps he's simply helping her load the dishes, but when the door slides open again, 20 minutes later, he's wearing that brassy smile that says, "I told you."

"Give her a private screening of *Snakes on a Plane*?" someone says, to barnyard laughter.

"Man, please. Y'all some freaks," he snaps with feigned hurt. "Besides, I'm in love. Let me show you my girl. The most beautiful thing in the world you ever saw." He goes in search of one of his phones and returns to us, tapping its screen. "Here she is now. Y'all ready for this? You say you are, but not really...."

He hands the phone around so all of us see the close-up of a shaved vagina.

"Shit, I think I know her," jeers 50, to fresh howls.

"Man, you don't know nothin' about this," sniffs Money. "Yo, who's Dallas playin' and when do they start? We still got time to get down?"

★★★★

OF ALL THE GREAT INVALIDS of millennial culture – the American theater, serious fiction, centrist Republicans – none has had its last rites pronounced more often than the great sport of boxing. It was first declared dead after the Second World War, after the golden-age giants – Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Gene Tunney and Henry Armstrong – exited and left nothing to their heirs. It was entombed again in 1981, when Muhammad Ali shuffled off to stone silence and early-onset Parkinson's. The chaplain was summoned for good, it seemed, in the mid-Nineties, when the ear-chomping crimes of Iron Mike Tyson bled the patient of its last pint of grace.

But boxing, like climate-change denial, keeps rising from the dead. "As long as there are ghettos, there'll be fighters," says Ron Borges of the *Boston Herald*, himself among the last of an extinction-level breed: literate boxing writers. "All it takes is two kids throwing bombs, and we're right back on the hook." What's propping up the corpse at its wake these days is a pair of pocket-size punchers: Mayweather and Pacquiao. Even fighting inferiors, they draw big numbers from boxing's last adherents, fetching pay-per-view crowds of a million or more at \$60 a throw. But they, like their fans, are aging fast (Money's 35, Pac-man's 33), and once they're gone, it may be time to seal the vault.

Mayweather knows these things; he's as polished a student of boxing as you'll find. Years before changing his name (and

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Contributing editor PAUL SOLOTAROFF wrote "The Surfing Savant" in RS 1102.



FATHERS AND SONS

Floyd Sr. began training his son at age seven, and by 18, Mayweather had won multiple Golden Gloves (1). With his dad at the gym as a kid (2), and in 2001, as a champion (3). The two have spent the past decade in a bitter feud and don't speak.



game) to Money, he was viewed as a brash but personable geek who'd sit and talk for hours about ring tactics. "He was born boxing-smart," says his trainer Roger Mayweather, who also happens to be his uncle. "Skills are great, but you win fights above the shoulders, and I never had to tell that kid twice."

Raised in chaos and in armed contention by a family coming apart at the seams, Mayweather was the second of three children, all by different fathers, in the house of his single mother, Deborah Orr. "My mom," he says, "was a functional addict who managed to keep a job. I mostly stayed at my grandma's house – till my grandma would get mad and send me back. On weekends, I went by my daddy's house, though he was always off doing this and that."

His daddy, of course, was Floyd Mayweather Sr., a dandified, doggerel-spouting, disputatious fop, who was a boxer, ladies' man and unsuccessful coke dealer on the west side of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Senior, now 61, had been a welterweight of promise who fought (and respectably lost to) Sugar Ray Leonard. His career stalled out in the late 1970s, though, when his younger brothers passed him on the rail. (Roger, the middle child, won ti-

tles in two divisions; Jeff, the baby, was a superfeatherweight champ.) "Daddy's career wasn't going so good, so he got involved with the drug game," says Junior. "He wasn't, from what I know, too slick at that either, and damn near got both of us killed."

Early in his youth – he was one going on two – Junior was in his father's lap when an in-law kicked down the door of their house, toting a 20-gauge shotgun. "An uncle on my mother's side – we called him Baboon – was in the same game as Daddy and they had beef." Senior, dead to rights, held his son to his chest, using the toddler as a shield. "He thought he wouldn't shoot him and hit me too – but Baboon did shoot him, blew out half his calf, buckshot burns all up and down his legs," says Junior. "Somehow or other, it missed me clean, which is how I know I'm blessed to have this life. And the crazy thing is, after Baboon got out of jail, he actually lived with us when we moved to New Jersey."

Junior spent most of his ricochet boyhood on the southeast side of Grand Rapids, a low-density hood of single-family houses, where the crime rate nonetheless rivaled downtown Detroit's. His mother left for a while to live with family in New Jersey; he joined her there for three bruising

years in the ill-town projects in New Brunswick. "The things I saw in Jersey, I'll never forget," he says. "Buildings that smelled like urine, no lights in the stairwell – you walk this way, not that, and someone robbed you. There were seven of us sleeping in a one-bed apartment, no heat, no hot water, no nothing." Even then, though, he had a spark that could not be doused, and he knew from grade school that he'd be famous. "As soon as he could write, he practiced signing his name – he was giving autographs to girls when he was eight," says Tawanna Howard, the oldest of two half-sisters, who, like many of his relations, including his mother and grandmother, lives close to him now in a house he bought in Vegas. "And he had a mouth on him even then; couldn't nobody shut him up. He always had to have the last word."

"We were boys from seventh grade because I talked a lot too, and he liked that I didn't back down," says Ricki Brazil, Money's best friend since middle school and the fixture in his changeable inner circle. "Other kids took it when he snapped on them because Floyd will just not stop. They finally kicked him out in 10th grade, I think. You could say he didn't take authority well. He didn't care that much, though – he was a star by then. The only one he listened to was his dad."

The history of boxing is riddled with stories of father-and-son tandems gone south: Roy Jones Jr. and the brutalizing father who tormented and beat him to make him great; Marvis Frazier, son of Smokin' Joe, who grossly mishandled the young man's training and nipped a fine career in the bud. But the knot between Mayweather *père* and *fils* is another order of strangeness altogether. Gunshots notwithstanding, it began, well enough, with Senior taking Junior to the gym at age seven and teaching him, bit by bit, the art of war: the shoulder-roll defense, in which the front shoulder raises and the head rolls back, making it nearly impossible to punch one's jaw; the jab-and-slip attack, wherein you sting opponents and disappear before they respond. "Blizzards, heat waves, it didn't matter, Big Floyd was out there running behind him in sweats and combat boots," says Brazil. "Yeah, they argued, but look at the results: Little Floyd was beating up grown-ass fighters while he was still in school."

Floyd grants that those things happened and credits Senior, in a side-of-the-mouth way, for steering him to the ring. "I was born to be where I'm at because it was pushed on me from birth. I didn't have no choice but be great." What he chiefly remembers, though, were the things not done, the basic duties of fatherhood untended. "He never gave me that one-on-one time; never took me to the movies; he was too busy doing his little hustle. In fact – and this is the first time I'm putting this



out there – I saw him sell my mother crack, saw him sell crack to my aunt who later died. He says, ‘You wouldn’t be what you are if it wasn’t for me,’ but all he did was take me to the gym.”

Reached at a gym in Vegas, where he’s training several fighters, Floyd Sr. colorfully disavows those charges. “Little Floyd’s a liar, and I got my hand to God: I never sold that woman drugs, or anyone else he says I did. All he knows of them days is the lies his mama fed him.” Likewise, on Junior’s claims of neglect: “That kid was with me every day from eight to 16 – I made him what he is, and he should praise me. But he got all that money now, and he’s singing a different story. That’s between him and his God; I got nothin’ to do with it.”

Both parties agree that Floyd Sr. was closely involved in Junior’s rise through the amateur ranks, training him to his first national Golden Gloves title while still in his midteens. But in ’93, Senior was tried and convicted of narco-trafficking, and left Junior, the Michigan champion at age 16, coachless. Enraged and bereft – “He chose drugs over me,” says Money – Junior won the ’94 Nationals on his own. In ’96, while his father was serving a five-year bid, Junior replaced him with his uncle Roger, whom he’d revered and spent parts of summers with since boyhood. Roger, a junior welterweight near the end of a solid career, promptly retired to teach Floyd Jr., steering him through the Olympics, where he won a bronze medal but was robbed of

THE UNDEFEATED

Mayweather hasn’t been beaten in 42 tries. His biggest win came against De La Hoya (above), the event where he bonded with close friend 50 Cent (opposite).

silver or gold by the judges, then on to a blazing start as a pro, winning 14 straight matches, most by KOs.

In 1997, though, Senior got out of jail and reappointed himself Junior’s trainer-manager. “I had put Roger in charge of him while I was away, and now it was my time to be the boss,” says Senior. “But I saw a different Floyd when I came back. He had him a little money and was surrounded by the wrong people, and didn’t want no one to tell him nothing. That ain’t the way I work.” Senior lasted two years, up to and through his son’s first title, then was fired by Junior and replaced – again – by Roger. “He was always taking credit for the work I’d done, and the work me and Roger did together,” says Money. “Said he taught me all I know – from where, man? From prison? C’mon, now.” To dig the blade in deeper, Junior ousted his father from the condo he’d bought him in Vegas, and spent the next seven years not speaking to him, except to lob insults in the press. Senior, heart-sick, roamed the margins, training fighters and hoping for the day his son would need him again and call him back to the inner circle. But he had taught Junior too well. He smoked everyone he fought in four classes, never losing a match or coming close. By now, Junior was rich beyond any-

one’s dreams and signed, in ’07, for the first superfight in ages, a bout with the golden goose, Oscar De La Hoya. Re-enter Oedipus, in the first installment of 24/7: Floyd Sr. was now De La Hoya’s trainer and was happy to prep Oscar to fight his estranged son for \$2 million, tearing the filial cord beyond repair. Junior won the bout on a close decision and soon retired from the sport for 20 months, depressed and confused by these machinations. But no one wanted to see this blood sport end. It was the best thing on cable since *King Lear*.

★★★★

TWO WEEKS AFTER OUR flight to Los Angeles, I drop in on Mayweather in Vegas. His gym, in a shambling commercial park a mile or so west of the Strip, flaunts none of the rococo, Sun King flourish-es for which he’s become notorious. In a word, it’s hell – an airless box of baked cement that, come May, is insufferable. “Be thankful that it’s March still,” whispers Bentley Weiner, an HBO producer whose crew has just arrived to begin shooting 24/7. “I’ve filmed here in August and lived to regret it. You step outside, where it’s 108, to cool off.”

Furnished with two rings, rusty roll-gate for doors and cheap plastic chairs for his guests, the gym is Mayweather’s tabernacle – the stage for his skills and the dais for his rants, both of them generously on

AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

offer. As always, a large chorus has turned out to shout amen to his signifying: his sisters, nieces, nephews, daughters, hype men, handlers, DJ and camera crew (his own, filming footage of HBO's crew filming footage of him for broadcast). You can't take a step without tripping over a toddler or a heavily perfumed woman, while leather-lunged men yell, "Hit that fuckin' nigger! He ain't nothin' but a punching bag!"

Mayweather, in the ring, is having his way with a fighter who's 10 years younger and 20 pounds heavier. Five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-punch combos, that great stiff jab of his doubled with straight rights, his back foot loading and launching. He keeps six sparring partners on the payroll through camp (about double what other fighters hire), and all of them come ready and dressed each day; he fights three or more per session, according to mood. The rounds go seven minutes, except when they last nine, with 20-second breaks in between. More, they're toe-to-toe, on-the-ropes action, with flush body shots and headgear-skewing crosses, the *boom!* of 10-ounce gloves landing square. It's easy to see now why Mayweather thinks he can fight as long as he wants. He has been dazed (but has never been dropped) less than a half-dozen times in his 16-year career, and is next to impossible to connect with twice, in the happy event you catch him once. "I just went to his body...couldn't even find his head," gasps J'Leon Love, one of today's battered opponents, after a 30-minute, four-round mauling. "That hand speed he's got, it's stupid-fast....He was picking off my shots before I threw 'em."

Meanwhile, Money has moved to the heavy bag, fresh as if just popping in from Starbucks. Bap-bap-bap sings his tattoo jab while his boys fill in behind him to count the punches. Fifty, a hundred shots without stopping; the chant gets picked up halfway around the gym. Two hundred, 300 shots, sweat flying like sparks now, and still he goes on stinging with both hands. Six hundred, 700, and he's talking to the bag, saying, "Take that, take that, take that," as he throws. Nine hundred, a thousand blows before he breaks for water, yelling, "Money May all day! Just gettin' started!" Not breathing hard, he's back inside the ring, winging flurry after flurry at his uncle's pads. "All natural! All natural!" he jeers, throwing a shot across the bow of his *bête noire* Pacquiao. "Ain't gotta cheat the game like some I know!" He takes a swig of Coke and crosses the crowded ring to bang away at a man in a bodysuit. "Not even in shape yet, but I'll get there soon! Been eatin' Popeyes chicken and drinkin' soda! But yet and still, you're watching me,

HBO! I own your fuckin' channel, if you don't know!"

This elicits peals of laughter from the women watching, and cries of "Yup, that's right!" from the Money Team.

"I drive those ratings, make money for my network! Yo, bring my father back, get my motherfucking father! Give these people what they want to see!"

Now the crowd is blazed, people jumping out of chairs to tell him to speak on that! The one abstention is a bald-shaved man with the build and bearing of a Secret Service agent. Leonard Ellerbe is Mayweather's chief of promotions, though he wears so many hats for his only client that it might be quicker to list the jobs he doesn't do. He began as his strength-and-



conditioning coach when Money was still known as Pretty Boy Floyd and fighting featherweights on Indian reservations in the late Nineties. Even then, though, the two men had a vision: to make Mayweather the world's most bankable boxer, then sever his ties to the promoter Bob Arum and keep all the fights' proceeds to themselves. This is fiendishly hard to do for a number of reasons, the most pointed of which is that the Arums and Don Kings of boxing own the rights of nearly every viable fighter. For most of four decades, the two promoters have divvied the sport's spoils between themselves, skimming sig-

nificant portions of their fighters' earnings while racking up lawsuits, fines and raids by federal agents. King, who's 80 now, has largely left the ring, but Arum, also 80, has emphatically not retired. To make a match with Pacquiao, you'd have to go through him – and why would he do business, for any sum of money, with a fighter who'd jumped ship on him? The only superstar to leave him and come up roses was De La Hoya; he sued Arum in 2000 and won a nasty, race-baiting battle to secure his freedom. But De La Hoya was the Latino pay-per-view king and could be confident of drawing handsome numbers regardless of who he fought. Not so with Mayweather, who was without an ethnic fan base and making an all-in wager on himself. "For years, he'd been begging us to market him better, to push him as the superstar he was," says Max Kellerman, the boxing analyst at HBO who's as astute an observer as the sport has. "He got tired of waiting around and went and branded himself. It was one of the greatest sales jobs you'll ever see."

The promotion he hit on, with Ellerbe's input, was to coin himself an iced-out anti-hero, affecting the posse and mackadocious street swag of a don by the name of Money. "We went everywhere we could to connect with the urban market: rap radio, BET, the NBA All-Star Game," says Ellerbe, a circumspect man of 50.

This was straight off the pages of World Wrestling Entertainment, a shotgun reset, in midcareer, as a "heel" instead of a "face." "The kids in the street loved it – the bragging, the spending – and guys in the barber shops, too," says Kellerman. "He took the role of villain – the one role available to him – and played it so well, he became boxing's leading man." Money's win over De La Hoya, his last fight for Arum, shattered every pay-per-view mark on record and crowned him the pound-for-pound prince of boxing. All he's done in the five years since is laugh his way to the bank, earning something on the order of \$200 million. "What the three of us have done here," says Ellerbe, meaning Money, himself and their partner, Al Haymon, "is build Floyd a platform that's the envy of every boxer. He controls his own business model and drives the train on how he generates money, whereas other guys stay in fucked-up situations and get beat like a wife by their promoter."

Though it wasn't his intention, Money may have blazed a path to a sport less polluted by Kings and Arums. Already, Cotto has taken the hint and struck out on his own for this fight. Other boxers are getting in touch with Ellerbe, seeking advice on how to make their run to freedom. "This is history," Ellerbe says. "We're changing the game, showing fighters how this thing is supposed to work. But not everyone

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FROM PRISON?**

could've done it; it took a special talent – a guy with the ring skills and the mouth.”

He nods at the ring, where the mouth in question is just warming up for Hour Three. “What you need to see?” says Mayweather. “You want an action fighter? Yo, I got you. You want to see some bombs here? I got you, I’m open all day, ain’t never closed!”



IF EVER A TOWN AND RESIDENT were built for lifelong bliss, that town would be Las Vegas and the resident Money May: They get each other in a way few couples do. The hours they keep, the style cues they relish, their bottomless thirst for more, more, more – they’re Caesar and Rome all over again. You’d tell them to get a room, but they’d beat you to it.

Money lives in a double-gated golf-course compound in an impossibly lush enclave called Southern Highlands. This Bel Air of the desert is the second-home heaven to software billionaires and hotel magnates; his house, the self-dubbed Big Boy Mansion, is down a short defile on the southern end and opens at night to matchless views of the neon-lit Gomorrah in the distance. It’s one of five properties he owns in Vegas, including a second, smaller villa (12,000 square feet, with a pool house) that he confusingly calls his other Big Boy Mansion. That house, vacant for almost three years, is being kept “for my kids when they’re grown enough to live there,” says Money. (The oldest of his four children by two mothers is Koraun, 12; the rest are 11, 10 and 8.) A mothballed mansion, though, gathers no dust: Money keeps it cleaner than an allergist’s office and fiddles constantly with the interiors, buying new rugs and furniture every year for a place no one enters but him.

The current Big Boy Mansion is a grandiose puzzle box of fieldstone slabs and brown marble. Walking up the drive, past his black-on-black buses – one, seating 12, carries his crew on road trips; the other is Mayweather’s rolling throne room to parties in all-night towns like L.A., with control-tower flatscreens, womb-sof recliners and a separate chamber for sleeping – you come to the first of two garages, where his Bentley Mulsanne, superstretch Rolls and Ferrari GTB are washed, waxed and detailed twice a week. (He has seven cars in Vegas, most of them white; in Miami, he owns the same cars but in black – his way, perhaps, of remembering where he is.) The smaller garage, out back, holds his newest exotics: the Indy-style race car 50 bought him for Christmas (the two met around the time 50 dropped his first album and have been inseparable since the De La Hoya fight) and to which he lacks a key at present; the Brinks armored truck that he’s just retrofitted as a bulletproof party van, with

wood flooring, a wet bar and retro disco lights; and the turbo-boasted Mercedes golf cart that flouts the tacit speed limit on fairways. Though Mayweather doesn’t golf, he’ll go out with his friends at night and cruise the community, blasting 50’s “I Just Wanna” and endearing himself to the neighbors.

Mayweather has just arrived at the house a little before 5 p.m., having freshly arisen after a night on the town with half the Kardashian clan. Compounding his lateness is the fact that he’s not sleeping here. His gym is 10 miles north of the house, and to cut 12 minutes of driving out of his day, he’s installed himself and his 12-man crew at the Mirage Hotel, where he’s spending hundreds of thousands a week on lodging until the night of the fight. He calls this “lockdown mode,” pushing distractions like traffic off to the side for two months, though you’re hard-put to think how bunking at a casino could offer more repose than his fortress-mansion. Perhaps it’s psychic training for a different kind of lockdown: On June 1st, weeks after the bout with Cotto, he’ll report to the Clark County Detention Center in Vegas to serve a sentence of 90 days for a series of pleaded-down charges for domestic assault on his ex of 15 years, Josie Harris, who claims to have been punched and had her life threatened by him in front of two of their kids. Money entered pleas of guilty and no contest, he says, to spare them a trial and put the matter behind him, but has backtracked his plea since the day he left court.

“Show me the pictures of her bruises,” he says now in high dudgeon. “If I beat her so bad, where’s the lumps and black eye? Trust me, I know how to leave a mark. You’d see it if I’d hit her.” To make matters worse, she’s still “riding my fame, posting old shots of us on Twitter.” Doing time for the beef is burden enough, though he seems to have made peace with his pending stint: “Everything happens for a reason, and we’ll learn from this one, too.” But letting her bask in his refracted glory? Now, that’s a crime he can’t let pass.

“SOME OF THE STUFF I SAY ON-CAMERA? THAT’S BUSINESS, MAN; THAT’S ME JUST BRINGING EYEBALLS TO THE SHOW. I WANT YOU TO WATCH ONCE, BECAUSE IF YOU DO THAT, I GOT YOU.”

I’ve met him in his “great room,” an expanse big enough to stage the BET Awards. There are two dining areas, a plexiglass vault lined with foil-wrapped Cristal that neither Money nor his courtiers drink, and, up a half-flight, his trophy chamber, where his seven belts glisten under lights. The master detail, however, is off to the side, hanging over wing chairs no one uses. It’s an enormous tapestry, woven by hand from a black-and-white photo of Money as a child. He’s a three-year-old alone in a boxing ring, wearing gloves so big he can barely raise them. The boy in the picture isn’t preening, however; he looks like a toddler left behind at the store, too stunned to ask for help. This is an amazing thing to mount on a public wall, an act of bracing candor or utter blindness. But that’s Money May all day, putting the whole thing up for view, and daring you to take him to your heart. Only Tupac was better at having it both ways, leaping from predator to prey in a single bound.

“It was hard, I won’t lie,” he says in his office. “My mom, she wasn’t able to keep an eye on me a lot, so my older sister, Tawanna, stepped up. She’d boil water on the stove for me to take a bath and make sure I had something to eat, no matter what. But somewhere, I got the idea that there was more out there, that I could grind my way to greatness if I didn’t fall. I remember, at 16, borrowing a car from someone so I could drive out where the rich folks lived. I saw those big houses and said, ‘I’m good enough to live here. Shit, good enough to bring my people with me.’”

He’s proud to have done so, and well, he should be; his heartfulness gets nowhere near its due. He supports, besides his crew, dozens of family members while pushing them to better themselves. “I tell ‘em, whatever it costs, I got you,” he says. “Just get yourself to college or start a business.” This goes double for their children, whose tuitions and lessons he pays for, no questions asked. “He’ll be furious when he reads this ‘cause he doesn’t want it out there, but he’s constantly doing nice things for people,” says Tanasha Pettigrew, Money’s longtime realtor who’s become his adviser and big sister. “He paid for Joe Frazier’s funeral, then Genaro Hernandez’s, the guy he beat for his first title. Right now, he’s paying the medical bills for a kid he’s never met, this nine-month-old boy with heart disease. He literally can’t watch the news without writing a check.”

Alone with him, I ask how he squares those gestures with the potty-mouthed preening at the gym. Money, who’s adroit at answering questions he likes, says that God has put him in a “lucrative position,” and he’s glad to be able to help out where he can. “I’m blessed and I know it – this was a billion-to-one shot, me having this house and all these things.” That isn’t false piety; he somberly lists the friends he and

Ricki grew up with who are dead or doing long bids, and goes on to talk soulfully about the ends most boxers come to: broke and brain-dimmed at 50. "This is a violent sport and guys stay too long. It hurts me in my heart to see 'em like that. One bad fight - really, one bad shot - and all the money I've made won't mean a thing." Away from his crew, much of the swagger falls away. Instead, he talks in the soft, contemplative tone of a man you're tempted to call Floyd. "Some of the stuff I say on-camera? That's business, man; that's me just bringing eyeballs to the show. I want you to

that point with Money, though, is worse than moot; it brings out the yo-boy in him. He seems convinced that he's the last "A" fighter and that it's beneath him to split a pot with "B" fighters, though no one else thinks of Pacquiao as such, least of all Pacquiao. Worse, Money believes he's done enough for the game to settle his karmic debt when he leaves. He couldn't be more wrong, though: His refusal to make this fight will drive away the game's last fans. When a sport is so hamstrung by self-love and greed that its two biggest stars don't collide, even the bitter-enders will say to

dants, rings and diamond-frosted watches worth six and seven figures each.

Pettigrew shows me the rest of the house, pointing out its marvels matter-of-factly: the two-story cineplex in boxing-glove leather; the cloakroom with luggage in sealskin and otter, stacked floor-to-ceiling on shelves; the mandatory complex of master closets holding rack-upon-rack of haute couture by Prada, Gucci and their over-voweled peers. Missing from this list, though, is any trace of Money's fiancée, Shantel Jackson: Her clothes are stashed in plastic containers on the floor of the second garage. "Oh, you noticed?" she says, with a tilt of her jaw, when I run into her later that evening. "Well, I'm getting the keys to my house next week. I call it my 5,300-square-foot closet." A fair-skinned bombshell with nuclear curves and hair colored the shade of cut mango, she declines to delve further into their domestic bargain before sitting down for hair and makeup. (Jackson, a model-actress, has two full-time stylists who accompany her on junkets and auditions.) No one can fault her, though, for taking the cue and moving into her own Big Girl Mansion; this place is overrun by her boyfriend's friends, few of whom know when to leave. "Twelve, 15 people here *all the time*," says Jackson, lowering her voice. "I have to kick them out at 7 a.m., so we finally get our little minute alone." It's anyone's guess what half those men do besides laugh at their boss's jokes and lose at spades. When asked about it, Mayweather is equivocal, saying, "Each of them got their lanes and stay in 'em." But his best friend, Brazil, who amply earns his keep by booking the parties and club dates, says, "The real job of everyone is just to stay awake. Floyd likes a lot of company, and the dude... don't... sleep."

It's at this point, at last, that you begin to tune out: when relentless becomes rapacious, its evil twin. The fight he won't take, the father he won't forgive, the girlfriend he won't clear a closet for: Just because you've got it all going your way doesn't make you a walk-off winner. Winners know when to grant a point and that there's power in admitting fault. Winners, moreover, know when to stop: to stop fighting, to stop bragging, to stop spending. The losers? Well, we've all seen that story: Tyson, earner of \$400 million, now a penniless pigeon chasing bread crumbs. Riddick Bowe, earner of \$80 million, now a broke mumble-fritz. None of them ever learned the great homily of war: That if there's no one who can beat you, then you'll beat yourself, using pride, rage or greed as your cudgel. Mayweather's enemy isn't Pacquiao and never was; it's the guy in the mirror called Money. Eventually, they'll get around to their superfight, either in this ring or the next. The early line in Vegas is 2-1, Money.



MONEY.
POWER, SUCCESS
in Vegas. Mayweather
keeps white cars. In
Miami, he has the
same rides, but in
black.

watch once, because if you do that, *I got you*. You'll be all 'What's he gonna do and say this week?'"

"Is that why you call out Pacquiao? To bring him to the show and make the fight?"

"Shit, I talked like that with Mosley, and we handled it in the ring and walked away friends."

The two camps have bickered over terms for a fight since late 2009, tiptoeing near an agreement and then backing away in an exchange of bratty charges. After the last such fallout, Pacquiao filed suit against Mayweather, claiming he was slandered by steroid allegations. That case is slogging ahead in federal court, where it figures to die if and when a fight is made.

"Man, I offered him \$40 million, more than he's made in his whole life, and he didn't take it. Oh, well."

"But if the fight's worth \$150 million..."

"And who brings those numbers? Most he ever made on a fight was \$8 million. I made \$40 million fighting Ortiz, and I'll beat that number easy against Cotto."

This seems a good time to raise history with him: Sugar Ray Leonard took a cut to fight Marvin Hagler. Evander Holyfield took a cut to fight Tyson. To press

hell with it and spend their 60 bucks on UFC.

Our chat done, I head down to his hangar-size kitchen, where members of the crew, wearing Team Money track suits, are immersed in loud pursuits. Three are parked at a marble counter, playing games on arcade video stations. Others are sprawled around a sofa pit, watching a middleweight bout on pay-per-view. Still more are on their phones, tracking wagers on late games in the regional round of March Madness. About the only thing no one's doing is eating: Mayweather detests the sight of food lying around and has most meals prepared off-site by his chef and carted over by truck. "I'm on 24-hour call," says Jourdan Atkinson, whose previous job was cooking for Sean Combs. "Last night, Floyd called at 4 a.m., wanting strawberry layer cake for breakfast." Ditto, his barber, Jackie, who is here till all hours on the off chance that he'll want his bald skull shaved, and his realtor, Tanasha, who's around to watch his back or, more like it, watch his money. At the moment, there's half a million dollars, cash, stacked on the coffee table, and at least half a million more in a drawer upstairs, along with pen-

T E DEVIL *e3* GREGG ALLMAN

IN AN EXCERPT
FROM HIS NEW
MEMOIR, THE
SOUTHERN
HIPPIE SOUL
BROTHER TELLS
OF SURVIVING
TRAGEDY, HEROIN
AND CHER

I GOT THESE TWO DRUMMERS..." ÷ THAT WAS HOW MY BROTHER Duane started his phone call that day in 1969. I'm thinking, "Two drummers? Sounds like a train wreck." ÷ I was in Los Angeles. Our old band, the Hour Glass, had washed out there, after we put out two albums full of material our record label forced on us. Last I'd heard from Duane, he was doing session work at Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. I was worried that he'd joined their staff – meaning he'd never have to go out on the fucking road again and we were done playing together. But here he was, calling me from back home in Florida. ÷ "And I got a lead guitar player." ÷ "Wait, what do you do?" I asked. "Last time I checked, you were a guitar player." ÷ "Don't worry about it," Duane said. "I'll show you when you get here. What I need you to do is write something for it."

When I got to the house in Jacksonville, I saw the whole band there – my brother, Berry Oakley, Dickey Betts, Butch Trucks and Jaimoe. When you walk into a room and everybody knows everybody else



Allman
in 1973

except you, it's tough, especially when you're as shy as I am. Thank God they had a real good sound system set up, so when I started singing, they could hear me.

They asked me if I had any songs, and I told them I had 22. I'd get through one, and they'd ask, "What else you got?" After 20 of them, I'm going, "Oh, fuck, I might be without a job here in a minute." I had two left – "Not My Cross to Bear" and "Dreams." I showed them "Dreams," and let me tell you, they joined right in. We learned that song the way you hear it today, and I was in, brother. We also played "Trouble No More," an old blues song, and that one wasn't much different than it is today, either.

I was pretty knocked out. Our thing was so perfect, and on paper it shouldn't have been. We had two drummers, Butch and Jaimoe, not to mention that one of them was a black man and we were in the Deep South, 1969. And on top of that, there were two guitar players, Duane and Dickey. I kept thinking, "This is going to be bedlam, just pure torture," but it wasn't. What my brother wanted was a revitalized, up-to-date rhythm-and-blues band, with the guitarists playing all this harmony, all these fills. My brother was way into Curtis Mayfield, king of the guitar fills. That's what Duane and Dickey tried to do.

One afternoon, not long after that first jam session, the guys took me to Dickey's place, put a blindfold on me and led me into this room. I took the blindfold off, and there it was – a brand-new B3 Hammond organ. It cost \$1,883. Somehow Duane had gotten the money. It was turned on, and there were four joints rolled – big, big phatties – plenty of paper, and a lot of pencils. They told me, "We'll see you in a few days, brother." Man, getting that Hammond helped me to finish songs like "Black Hearted Woman."

Next, we had to come up with a name for the band. Duane said, "Write down what you think it should be, and put it in this hat." My choice was Beelzebub, the right-hand man of the devil, while my brother went with something from *Lord of the Rings*. The other four all said, "The Allman Brothers Band." My brother and I both said, "Oh, fuck – you all are kidding, right?" I think they chose it because of my brother's leadership.

It was Duane who got me through the first part of my life. I looked at him like Merlin the Magician, because he had so much charisma – he lived hard, fast and on the edge. We would meet people in the business who would say things like, "Well, if you all turned just a little bit pop..." Duane would say, "If you just turn your ass a little bit around, the door is right behind you."

He was always pulling for me – ever since we were just two kids being raised by a single mother. Our father had been killed by a hitchhiker he picked up when I was two and Duane was three. My uncles always drummed it into my head not to ever hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker. The only time I ever did bum a ride was after Duane called me that day in March 1969.

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND WEREN'T IN JACKSONVILLE very long, because Twiggs Lyndon arrived just after I did. Twiggs worked for Phil Walden at Capricorn Records in Macon, Georgia, and Phil had signed on as Duane's manager. He'd put Twiggs in charge of getting us up to Macon. He told us, "We got you all a place," which was an old two-story clapboard house that had been converted into an apartment building. Twiggs rented it and put a Coke machine in there and filled it with beer.

One day this guy came passing through town with a two-quart jar of these little pink pills – pure psilocybin mushroom extract. We'd get up in the morning and each pop half a pill. Somebody would name a key, and we'd start jamming. (The mushroom logo for the Allman Brothers Band came out of this experience.) One time, somebody left four or five pills on the back of the toilet, and Jaimoe thought they were speed, so he took them all. It was the only time I've ever seen fear in that man's face. He had this little transistor radio that would pick up jazz stations, and he walked around with that radio to his ear for pretty near two days. That was the only thing holding him down to the ground. Everybody was stashing their shit in case we had to call the paramedics, but he came out of it OK.

We just wanted to play all the time, and it didn't matter where. I remember our first gig at Piedmont Park in Atlanta like it was yesterday. We only had about 12 songs, but it was a set, because of the length of some of the songs. From the very beginning, we were too loud. My brother got double-stack 50-watt Marshall amps, and Dickey got double-stack 100-watt Marshalls. That's why I've always stayed way over on stage right – to get out of the line of fire.

By February 1970, the Allman Brothers Band were at the Fillmore East in New York, playing with the Grateful Dead and Love. I had heard all this hype about the Dead. They played while the crowd danced around, twirling and jerking a whole lot. I didn't understand it at all, and I was the same age as them.

"What do you think of these guys?" I asked my brother.

"This is shit. You see them jugs that they're passing out?" he said. And then I knew what he was talking about. One sip of that shit and it'd be raining fire, man, so no wonder everybody was grooving on that music – anything would sound good like that. I liked them all right. [Jerry] Garcia called me a narc at one point, but he and my brother got along because they were guitar players. Mostly, I just ignored them.

When we weren't playing shows, we found other ways to entertain ourselves.

The rule was that what you did on the road was nobody else's business. If you wanted to take seven ladies up to your room, and you had the dough, by God, go for it. Our roadie Twiggs was the original dirty old man. In his road case was a chart with the legal age of consent in every state, and he had copies made for everyone in the band. He'd hand them out before the tour started, and he kept extras, in case you lost it.

People have said the Allman Brothers got the best-looking women, but I don't know if that's true. We might have just been a little more picky, you know? It's like that old joke: What's the difference between a pig and a musician? A pig won't fuck a musician. My nickname was "Coyotus Maximus." Sometimes after a gig, later in the Seventies, I would have women in four or five different rooms. Mind you, I wouldn't lie to anybody; I'd just say, "I'll be right back." Lord have mercy, if I had a \$20 bill for every time I told a woman, "I'll be right back!"

We were on the road 300 days in 1970, and it wore on all of us. One morning after a show in Buffalo, when we were getting ready to go back to the club to get our equipment, Twiggs came in our room to use the phone, and he woke us up screaming at the promoter, "You motherfucker, you're gonna pay us that goddamn money, and we're not going to play another night!" I didn't think too much of it, but he did have this Finnish gutting knife my brother bought him strapped to his belt.

IT WAS DUANE WHO GOT ME THROUGH THE FIRST PART OF MY LIFE. I LOOKED AT HIM LIKE MERLIN THE MAGICIAN. HE HAD SO MUCH CHARISMA.



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SOUTHBOUND

The Allman Brothers Band in 1969: Duane Allman, Dickey Betts, Gregg Allman, Jaimoe, Berry Oakley and Butch Trucks

A little bit later, I overheard my brother trying to calm Twiggs down, so I got up, took a shower, and went to get something to eat.

I came back to the room, and my brother was white as a ghost.

"What is it, man?" I asked.

"Gregory, Twiggs went on down there and killed that man. He stabbed him five times, maybe more."

Our attorney called us pretty quick and said, "I want you to get in that bus. Whichever one of you looks the least like a long-haired hippie, get in and drive, and get the hell out of here as quick as you can." We were out of there in a flash.

Now, people have long speculated on Twiggs' mental health, but he was really just overworked. He was so fucking thorough that he didn't realize he was making the job twice as hard. Twiggs could have done just as well with only half the energy. Like I said, he didn't snap very often, but when he did, watch out.

Twiggs ended up doing about 18 months in jail. In the end, he was found not guilty for reasons of insanity. He spent six months in a mental hospital and was back on the road with us by the spring of 1972.

ON AUGUST 26TH, 1970, WE WERE DOWN IN MIAMI Beach, playing a free gig on a stage the city set up on a big median on Collins Avenue. I looked out over the crowd and I saw this set of beautiful burnt-sienna suede boots. I followed that boot up the body, and there was Mr. Eric Clapton. After I shit myself, I looked over to Duane, thinking, "I hope to Christ he doesn't see him, because this will either be the finest 'Whipping Post' we'll ever play, or this fucker's going to fall apart." But Duane didn't notice anything, so we finished the show with a real good "Whipping Post," and then Duane eases over to me. "Baybrah," he said - short for baby brother - "dig who the fuck is sitting over there."

Tom Dowd, Atlantic's house producer, introduced all of us, and then we headed to Criteria Studios, where Derek and the Dominos were working on *Layla*. It turned out that Eric was as much in awe of my brother as Duane was of him. Eric

didn't play slide at the time, and he loved my brother's slide work. When Tom asked if Duane could come watch the sessions, Eric said, "Watch? Hell, no. If he shows up, he has to play." One of the first things they did was "Layla." It didn't have that intro yet, but once they added that, the song took off. Duane and Eric sounded so good together; it was the perfect blend of a Gibson and a Fender. You could tell that history was being made.

In March 1971, we went to the Fillmore East to record a live album. We played two shows each day, and the audience was just whupped by the time we were done. Those concerts were so special. It was almost like somebody knew what was gonna happen. But I was still the big doubting Thomas of the whole thing. It goes back to high school - I made the other guys wait to tour until I got my diploma, because, as I told my brother, "Man, we will never make enough money to pay rent doing this." My brother would say, "Gregory, you need to get a little more faith." He was right - by the end of the year, the *Fillmore* record blew the top off the fucking charts.

There's no denying that drugs were a big part of our lives in those days. After we had gotten into cocaine, we were playing a gig, and we went to count off "Statesboro Blues." My brother said, "One, two - the band needs some coke!" At intermission, there must have been nine cats back there with shit to sell. Heroin made its first appearance in 1970. Back then in Macon, it was really hard to find a nickel bag of reefer, but you could buy heroin in a snap - \$7 a bag. It wasn't long until almost everybody associated with the Allman Brothers Band was addicted to opiates, which we called "doojee." I honestly didn't know that this doojee stuff was heroin.

We were at a party in New York City, and Ahmet Ertegun, the founder of Atlantic Records, came up to me and my brother

er and said, "Could I see you both back here for just a second? I just want to talk to you." Jerry Wexler, his partner at Atlantic, joined him. I thought they were taking us back there to personally congratulate us on *At Fillmore East*. Instead they tore into us about our addiction.

"Do you have any fucking idea what you are messing with?" they asked. "It killed Charlie Parker, it killed Billie Holiday, and it will kill you too."

So it was decided that Duane, Oakley and a couple of our crew would go into treatment in Buffalo, while I headed home to quit cold turkey. I went and saw my doctor and got some 'ludes, but they only helped when they knocked me completely out. By the time the guys got home, I was all right. They were there for a week, and they were given methadone. But even though we'd all stopped with heroin, it didn't mean we were clean.

Before they'd gone into treatment, I'd given Duane a \$100 bill and asked him to pick me up a gram of blow when they were done, because he was going to spend a day or two in New York after treatment. When they got back, I asked him about it, and he told me, "I'm sorry, bro, we saw Buddy Miles last night, and he did all of your blow." That really pissed me off, and I stayed up drinking most of the night.

The next morning, I drove over to Duane's house and I walked in, because he never locked his door. I was going to get some blow, or my money back, one or the other. He was asleep in bed, and I mean gone, with his clothes still on. On the nightstand was a little vial, almost completely full with blow. I took me a dollar bill, poured out about half a gram, and snorted it up. He had plenty left, and I put it back on the nightstand.

I got home, and the phone rang. It was my brother, and he was fighting mad. He said, "You little cocksucker, did you come over here and steal some of my blow?"

"No, I did not," I told him.

"OK, man, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have called you up, accusing you of some shit like that. I sure do love ya, baybrah," and he hung up. The last thing I ever said to my brother was a fucking lie, man.

I WAS HOME AND I GOT A PHONE CALL. A WOMAN'S VOICE said, "Your brother had a slight" – she used that word, "slight" – "motorcycle accident." And the way she said it, I just knew. I threw on some clothes and ran to the hospital. When I got there, Oakley, Dickey and Jaimoe were already there, and Butch came in soon after.

They didn't take us to the waiting room, they took us in the chapel – that's when I really knew. A surgeon came out and said, "We brought him back up for just a minute or two, but he's gone." Duane was just too busted up. I'm glad I didn't see him like that, because I don't have to live with that memory.

We buried Duane with a silver dollar in one pocket, a throwing knife in the other and his favorite ring on his hand – a snake that coiled around his finger, with two eyes made of turquoise. There were a whole lot of people at the funeral; people came in

from everywhere. And even though it didn't sit right with me, I got up there with one of his old guitars and played "Melissa." "This was my brother's favorite song that I ever wrote," I said. It was hard, but I got through it.

I was pissed off at Duane for dying, for leaving me behind with all that shit to deal with. Then you get pissed at yourself for being pissed, because you loved them so much. It took some time, and probably a few glasses of spirits, but somehow the five of us got it together. I was going to do exactly what Duane would have done had it been the other way around, and that was to say, "Let's go fucking play." We dove in that much harder, finishing off the *Eat a Peach* album. All of a sudden, Dickey started playing slide guitar. The music was still rich, and it still had that energy – it was still the Allman Brothers Band.

But not everyone made it back to normal. Berry Oakley had been our bass player ever since that day in March 1969, but the truth is that his life ended when my brother's did. After Duane died, Berry would start each morning with a case of beer, then he'd start on the Jack Daniel's, and about halfway through the Jack, he was on his knees, man. The man could not hold his liquor. Onstage, he'd hit maybe every fifth note. You could get to Oakley's house at 7:00 in the morning, and he'd already be

fucked up. I don't think he wanted to die; I just think he didn't want to live.

I've heard that when Oakley had his crash he drove his bike head-first into that bus, on purpose. Who knows? He was drunk when it happened. He got up after the crash, but he wouldn't get in the ambulance. He went home and had a brain hemorrhage. Upset as I was, I kind of breathed a sigh of relief, because Berry's pain was finally over.

Even though we'd been through hell, we were rolling bigger than ever. We replaced Oakley with Jaimoe's friend Lamar Williams, and when we released *Brothers and Sisters* in 1973, the thing just fucking exploded, all the way to Number One on the charts.

We were visited on tour by a young reporter for *ROLLING STONE* named Cameron Crowe. Of course, I had no idea he would go on to make *Almost Famous* nearly 30 years later, and that it would include some of our stories.

When that movie came out, I wished my brother couldn't have been there to watch it. The jumping off the roof into the pool, that was Duane – from the third floor of a place called the Travelodge in San Francisco. My brother wanted to do it again, but the cat who owned the place came out shaking his fist, yelling at him. We told that story all the time, and I have no doubt that Cameron was around for it.

S HE SMELLED LIKE I WOULD IMAGINE A MERMAID would smell – I've never smelled it since, and I'll never forget it. It was January 1975, and I was playing a solo show at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. After the show, my buddy Chank ran up to me, going, "Guess who's here?"

"Who?" I asked.

"I want you to just ease over that railing and look to your right."

There she was, man: Cher. I couldn't believe how beautiful she was. I got my guitar and headed down toward her. Cher



BLUES BROTHERS

Gregg (left) and Duane Allman in late 1970, a year before Duane's death.
Top: The brothers in high school.

showed up with David Geffen as her date. I had met Geffen on many occasions before, but I didn't acknowledge him at all – or anyone else, for that matter. I was so rude; I didn't say hello or nothing at all, because I was so blinded by her.

I was walking by, and she was down on the floor looking for something. She looked up and said, "Oh, I lost my earring." Then she said, "Here's my number – call me."

The next day, I asked her out to dinner. I went to her house in a limousine, and when she came out, she said, "Fuck that funeral car," and handed me the keys to her blue Ferrari. We went to a Moroccan restaurant on Sunset, and we sat there, eating with our hands with the sitars playing. She didn't have shit to say to me, and I didn't have shit to say to her. What's the topic of conversation? It certainly ain't singing.

I said to her, "I've got a friend who lives up in the Hills, and his wife is Judy Carne." Cher knew Judy, who used to be on *Laugh-In*, from years before, but she didn't realize that Judy was into heroin. We got up to Judy's house, and I had just a little taste of doo-jee. I nodded out in the bathroom for 20 minutes or so, while Cher was out in the living room with Judy, who's also nodding out. I came out of there and asked her, "OK, toots, what else would you like to do?"

"I want to get the fuck out of here as fast as I can," she said.

I called her the next day and said, "Wait, before you say anything – that was possibly the worst fucking date in the history of mankind. We might be ready for the *Guinness Book of World Records*." She agreed with me, so I said, "Well, listen, seeing how it was so bad, why don't we try it again, because it can only go better this time?"

We went dancing. I don't know how to dance, but I got drunk enough to where I did. I danced my ass off. This is when disco was just taking off, so we did some dirty dancing. She had one drink, while I had my 21, of course. When we got back to her place, she took me out to her rose garden, and all the roses were just starting to bloom.

Part of me is thinking, "Gregory, you do not belong here, man," but the other part of me is saying, "Come on, let's go! Get your ass upstairs, boy!" We went up this big, huge staircase to the third floor and she started ripping my fucking clothes off. She was hot to trot, man, and we made some serious love. In many of her interviews, she said that I was the best – the best – in the bedroom. I always thought that was nice, because I'm certainly not the most endowed guy there is, but as the old saying goes, "It's not what you got, it's how you use it."

Fast-forward to six months later. One Sunday I woke up with Cher, and she said, "What are you doing today?" I hadn't thought about it, because I hadn't even gotten out of bed. She said, "Well, listen – Mr. Harrah, who's a good friend of mine, has sent us down his private jet. I was thinking we'd fly over to Vegas and get married." I thought, "Well, why not?" I cared about her quite a bit. Well, I cared about one side of her. Couldn't stand the General Patton side of her. But I did love the helpless little girl side of her.

We got in the jet and flew to Vegas, where we had one of the wedding suites at Caesars Palace. We were trying to stay low-profile, which was damn near impossible. They had to smuggle us downtown to get the license, so they started a rumor that Frank Sinatra was upstairs at Caesars getting married. It worked, because then everyone was looking around for Frank. We got back with the marriage license and went upstairs to some meeting room, where they wheeled in two big silver trays with caviar all over them. That was when I got my first taste of black beluga caviar, and, man, I was hooked. The judge came

in, and finally someone was like, "Can you stop cramming yourself full of caviar so we can start the wedding?"

Four days after we were married, Cher found a set of works in a leather bag I carried. I'd been trying to play the role of a straight man, and she thought I had quit dope a few months earlier. Cher was very much in love, and she was so naive I couldn't believe it. I tried to shelter her from the deviousness of a dope fiend. Sometimes I might do a little too much, and she'd go, "You look mighty sleepy. Are you OK?" When she found my rig, she just got in her Ferrari and took off.

When she got back, I tried to explain to her what an evil thing it was, but there was no way for her to understand that, because she was pretty naive when it came to drugs. Her father had been a heroin addict, and I guess my addiction took her back to that time. When she had driven off, she had gone to her lawyer and filed for divorce, but after we talked she decided to let it go. Of course, it was all over the papers that she had filed for divorce after four days, but nothing at all about how she didn't follow through with it.

I decided to go to rehab at a place in Connecticut called Silver Hill, which was a pretty exclusive rehab – people used to dress up for dinner. They had me in the Irving Berlin suite. I was there for 30 days. I came home for two weeks, and then I was right back in there, but this time it was for alcohol only. Jones-

nesing for a drink, once you've been addicted to alcohol, is just about as bad as jonesing for heroin.

Our son, Elijah Blue Allman, was born on July 10th, 1976, and I lived with him until the time he was walking around. The three of us stayed out in L.A. along with Cher's daughter, Chastity. I remember when Chastity had to have one of those Stingray bicycles, with the banana seats and those ape-hanger handlebars. I told her, "You don't want one like everybody got on the street. Go put on some dirty clothes, tie your hair back and go with me. We're gonna go to a neat place."

I took her to the junkyard, and we found a bike. I had it sandblasted, and

then had a kid paint it bronze – real nice paint job. Then I went and bought sprockets and a chain and tires, all that stuff, and a leopard-skin seat, and together we built that son of a bitch. When we were done, she had the baddest bike in the neighborhood, and I used to be her knight in shining armor. Later on, though, she wouldn't say two words to me, and I don't know why. She probably heard so many ghastly stories. As far as Chastity's sex change, it's not your everyday thing, but I just hope he's happy and I wish him a very long, successful life.

Living with Cher was all right, but there were things about her that drove me crazy. One night we were sitting at home, and she said, "I really don't feel like staying in tonight. Why don't we go out and get a bite?"

I said, "Sure, let's go to some quiet, dark place." There was this Cantonese restaurant on the outskirts of Beverly Hills that we liked, so we decided to go there. And wouldn't you know it, there were at least 35 fucking photographers waiting for us when we got there. Now, who told them? It sure wasn't me.

I was really glad that she never asked me what I thought of her singing, because she's not a very good singer. When she talks, she has the sexiest voice. I tried to tell her that that's the way she ought to let it out when she sings, but she never wanted to hear it, until one day she said to me, "Well, enough other fucking people like it, so if you don't like it, fuck you."

Finally she said, "Why don't you produce a record for me?" That led us to start talking about making an album together. *Two the Hard Way*, by Allman and Woman, came out later in

**ONE DAY, I WOKE UP WITH
CHER. SHE SAID, "WHAT
ARE YOU DOING TODAY?
I WAS THINKING WE'D
FLY OVER TO VEGAS AND
GET MARRIED."**



'77. That record sucked, man. It didn't sell worth a shit. In November 1977, I went over to Europe for some solo shows with my band, and we took Cher with us. We did a few Allman Brothers tunes, then we did some of my stuff, and then Cher would come out and we'd do about six or eight songs. The crowd was pretty interesting, because half the people were in tuxedos, because they thought they were going to see Sonny and Cher. The other half of the crowd was all backpacks and Levi's jackets, and they were there to see the Allman Brothers.

One day, Cher came to me, crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me, "We've got to cancel the rest of the tour. I can't stand the fighting." So we ended it right then. We went home the next day, and that was the last time I ever played with her. That tour, along with everything else, laid bare the fact that things had changed between us. I had never done anything to hurt her; I'd hurt and degraded myself with drugs and booze.

Soon after, she came to me with this big wad of money, \$50,000 maybe, with a red rubber band around it. She said, "I want you to take this and get an apartment and stay there for a couple of months, and let me think this whole thing over. I'll get back in touch with you. We'll see what happens."

I told her, "Honey, you keep your money, because I make a pretty damn good living on my own. You got your reasons, and I sure hope you come to grips with them. You've got my number." So I walked, man, and I went down to Daytona to see my mother. We were divorced in 1979.

WHEN THE ALLMAN BROTHERS GOT THAT GOD-damn plane, it was the beginning of the end.

We figured that for our first tour after *Brothers and Sisters* we'd make a change to our travel arrangements. This jet was burgundy and gold, and had been leased in the past to the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin. Finally, Elton John bought it, and he painted little clouds and cartoon things all over it and put ELTON on the tail.

The layout was in-fucking-credible. It had two bedrooms, with round beds and grizzly-bear blankets. Every eight feet in the cabin, there was a TV monitor. The first time we walked

TWO THE HARD WAY
Gregg Allman and Cher hang out together in Beverly Hills, 1977.

onto the plane, "Welcome Allman Bros" was spelled out in cocaine on the bar. At the end of the bar was a Hammond, and a set of drums, and some amps, so we could jam if we wanted to.

From August '75 through May '76, we did 41 shows. We opened the Superdome in New Orleans in front of 96,000 people. Everything was over the top, just flat-out unnecessary. We had 30 roadies on that tour – 30. Our roadies had roadies. We had a guy whose only job was to open limo doors for us.

I had a guy with me named Scooter Herring, who was kind of my assistant. Scooter was this big, tall, raw-boned son of a bitch who could ride the shit out of a Triumph motorcycle. I'd met Scooter back in '74, at this biker bar in Macon, and we became real good friends. Around that time, I got a huge royalty check. Scooter's wife wanted to buy a house, and he came to me and said, "Man, Karen is dying for this house." I had them over for dinner, and I had written a check for \$54,000 and put it in an envelope. As they were leaving, I said, "Wait, you forgot something," and I handed them the envelope. I told them not to open it until they got out in the car, and they came running back in. Man, Karen was just bawling her eyes out.

When the Allman Brothers went back on the road in 1975, Scooter came out as an assistant tour manager. But he had another responsibility, one that was for me and for me only: He was my drug delivery guy. I didn't ask him where he got the stuff, but he helped me score whenever I needed it, and back then that was a big job. Onstage, we were just going through the motions. If you listen to tapes of those shows, you can tell what drug we'd taken that night by how we were playing. Up-tempo and edgy? Coke. More jazzy and slow? Codeine.

Things continued to go to shit when we got home to Macon and counted our money. At the end of nine months of touring, we had \$100,000 – and that was the gross amount. This was after 41 gigs at \$80,000 apiece. Mostly, we were out of money because we were buying blow and heroin by the ounce, not to mention our regular clothing dip. Plus we had hot and cold running women, and the best food you could eat.

We had a meeting about money, and I was afraid that we were actually going to come up with a negative amount. The six of us were there, along with Twiggs and Scooter Herring.

Right in the middle of the meeting, the authorities came in, broke the whole thing up, and took Scooter away in handcuffs.

That was when I learned where Scooter had been getting the drugs from – a guy named Joe Fuchs, a pharmacist in Macon mixed up with some people rumored to be in the Dixie Mafia. He'd been selling pharmaceutical-grade cocaine to them as well as to Scooter. It was through his involvement that the authorities had gotten turned on to Scooter, and by extension, me. On May 28th, 1976, Scooter was indicted on charges of conspiracy to possess narcotics with the intent to distribute. I had left Macon and was back in California with Cher. Because of Cher, because of the band, I was front-page news every day. Eventually I was granted immunity from prosecution in exchange for my testimony in front of the grand jury and later at the trial.

That was an experience that I hate to relive today, because every question was hard. People were afraid for my life, because there were some powerful people who thought I knew more than I did. The phone would ring, and a voice would be going, "If you say the name of so-and-so, you'll find a 20-gauge up your ass."

There was all this speculation that Scooter was connected to the Dixie Mafia, but if he was, he never said anything about it to me – and by God, he would have told me something after 12 beers. Because of the threats, they hid me out with four FBI guys assigned to me for protection. I wasn't allowed to read anything, or watch TV, but they did give me a bottle of whiskey every night. The thing lasted for what seemed like an eternity, and it was a complete drag. Wherever I went, people would yell shit at me. There was no evidence against me – it was all hearsay.

Scooter's lawyers were trying to make me look bad to lighten the load on him, and the prosecuting attorney tried to make me and Scooter look like real, real close friends – I mean, like we were gay. The judge got so upset that he stood up and threw his pencil down and announced, "This man is not on trial here. If you ask him a question that is out of line like that again, I will throw you out of this courtroom."

On July 19th, 1976, Scooter was sentenced to 75 years in prison for the coke he had sold me. The conviction was front-page news when it happened, but much less sensational was the fact that Scooter only went to prison for 18 months. Later, I'd be onstage, counting off a slow number, and right in the middle of "one, two, three," you'd hear someone yell out, "Narc!" It wouldn't throw me off; it made me play twice as hard, because I knew what the truth was.

The whole mess with Scooter was the last straw for the band. In August 1976, we officially broke up when Jaimoe wrote a letter to the Macon newspaper which stated that there was no more Allman Brothers Band. Not long after, Butch and Dickey came out individually and said the same thing, with Dickey doing it in *ROLLING STONE*. I remember in that issue, there was a picture of him, and a quote from him saying, "I'll never play onstage with Gregg Allman again." No problem, brother!

After Duane's death, there needed to be a leader in the band. Dickey was capable of handling things, but he would overdo it every time. He'd just want to get into a fistfight. Why didn't I become the leader? Because the first thing I would have done is fire Dickey and get another guitar player. When I think of the time and money he wasted in the studio and during rehearsal – I mean, there are 29 takes of "Les Brers in A Minor," and we used the second one. We must have been pretty attached as a band to take that crap off of him for so long.

But really, there ain't one thing or person alone that broke up the Allman Brothers Band. It was everything and everyone. They were all just easy excuses, ways of talking around the unavoidable truth: that none of us knew when or how to walk away.

DON'T KNOW IF MY BROTHER IS FACE UP OR FACEDOWN in his grave – he's done so many damn pirouettes over the money we wasted. On the other hand, I'm sure he's very proud about what we went on to do: The Allman Brothers would re-form again and again over the years, with new members coming and going. Those two warriors on the drums – Butch and Jaimoe – are still there. In 1995, we were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, not long before I finally got sober. Six wives, hepatitis C, a liver transplant in 2010 – I've been through all of that, and I'm still in the Allman Brothers Band today. The crowds keep coming back.

It's good to wonder what would have happened if Duane had lived. I don't believe we would have stayed together continuously for more than 40 years, but I know we would have made some great music.

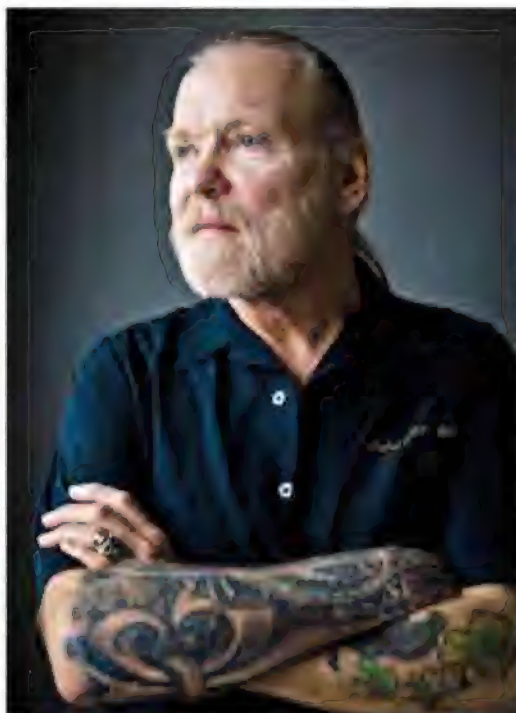
When I got over being angry that he was gone, I prayed to him to forgive me, and I realized that my brother had a blast. Duane's footprints are so deep that he's still being talked about today. In 2003, *ROLLING STONE* voted him the number-two guitar player of all time, behind Hendrix. I wish there was some way I could've shown him, but I know he knows.

I fully believe that there's more to it than just this life here on Earth. Do I believe in reincarnation? After seeing Derek Trucks play guitar with the Allman Brothers Band, how could I not? People ask me about Derek and my brother all the time, and I usually give them a little generic answer, because it's a pretty heavy question.

But I have very good peripheral vision, and sometimes I'll catch him out of the corner of my eye, and the way he stands looks just like my

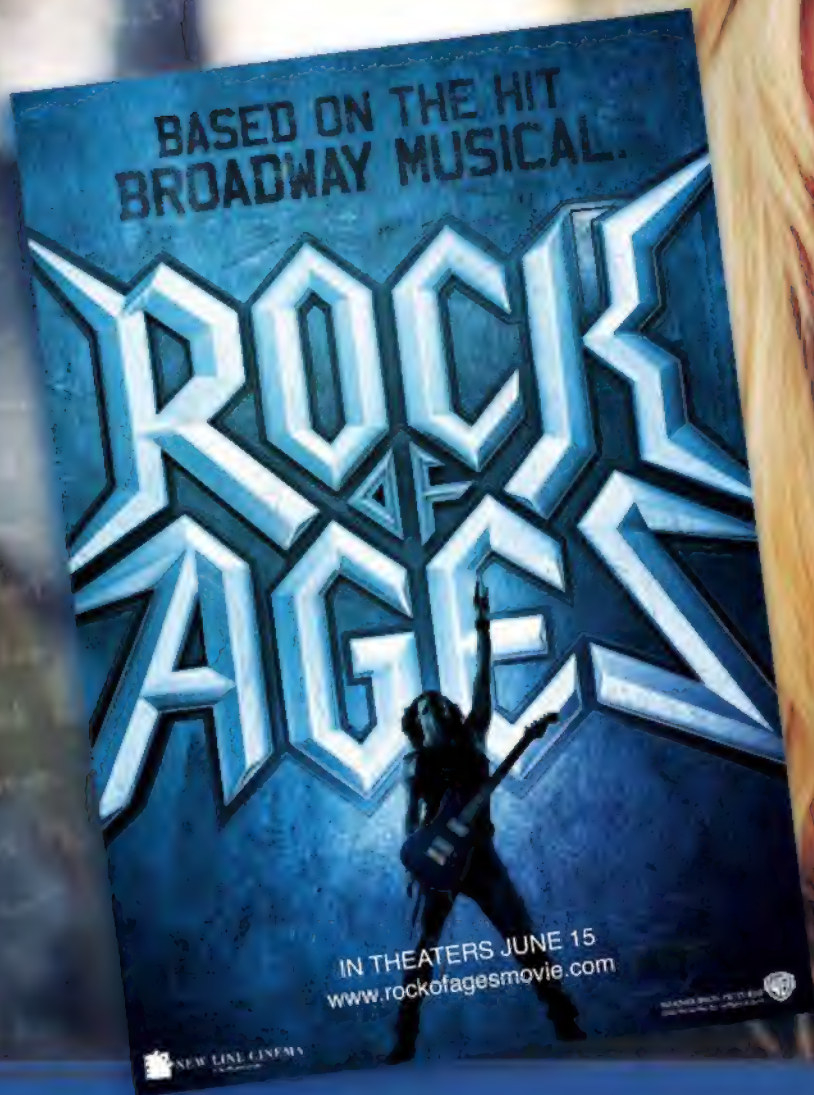
brother. Duane used to make the damndest faces when he played. You could tell when it was getting good for him. Duane wouldn't have been very good at poker. Derek does it too – just a hint of it, but I catch it. I know what's he doing.

I've played with some real killers in my career, but there's just something about playing with the Allman Brothers. It's like a special fishing hole that you have – that one over there is good, but this one down here is a motherfucker. Right now, the Allman Brothers are as good as we can be on any given night. The only thing that can stop us is us, and that ain't no lie. **Q**



SOUL SURVIVOR

Six marriages, hepatitis C and a liver transplant: Allman at age 63 in 2011



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Huge riffs, wild ideas, tunes for miles: Jack White turns in a classic

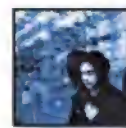
Jack White

★★★★½

Blunderbuss

Third Man/Columbia

BY ROB SHEFFIELD



On the excellent single "Love Interruption," Jack White sings, "I want love to roll

me over slowly/Stick a knife inside me/And twist it all around." Ask and ye shall receive, Jack. By the end of *Blunderbuss*, the guy has knives sticking out of his heart like peacock feathers, yet he's hungry for more punishment. *Blunderbuss* is his first solo album; it's also his most expansive and masterful record since the White Stripes' 2003 classic, *Elephant*, full of brilliant songs about how love tears your body and soul to shreds, slams your fingers in the door, grinds your face in the dirt.

Until now, White has always preferred to slip into the guise of a band, with other musicians as props for the movie he's making in his head. That can mean the one-of-the-boys camaraderie of the Raconteurs, but this mama-loving Catholic boy's favorite trick is turning women into rock goddesses: Meg White, Alison Mosshart, Alicia Keys, even Loretta Lynn. White knows how to make women feel like stars, whether it's the ladies in his bands, the ones he sings his tortured love songs to, or the ones in the audience.

But on *Blunderbuss*, the star is him, with a mostly female gang of musicians. The Nashville cats here are real ballers, with Autolux's Carla Azar on drums behind Brooke Waggon-

er's church piano, Olivia Jean's guitar, Bryn Davies' upright bass and Ghana-born singer Ruby Amanfu. And to add to the overall mind-freak effect, the backup chorus on some of these love-ravaged songs includes his ex-wife Karen Elson, less than a year after the couple celebrated their sixth wedding anniversary by throwing themselves a raging divorce party.

White's cohorts on *Blunderbuss* have the muscle to bring all his wildest musical ideas to life. There's one vintage R&B cover, the 1960 Little Willie John classic "I'm Shakin'." The other songs are all over the map, from the ace hippie funk of "Trash Tongue Talker" to the country soul of "Blunderbuss." "Missing Pieces" and "Take Me With You When You Go" come on like hairy British prog-folk, complete with archaic time signatures; it makes you wonder if White has been studying Traffic circa *John Barleycorn Must Die*.

There are plenty of made-in-Nashville flourishes - fiddle, mandolin, pedal steel. White mostly strums acoustic, occasionally going electric for noise-splutter solos. But he power-riffs the Seventies stoner-boogie "Sixteen Saltines," his loudest and funniest tribute to the destructive force of passion and the healing power of overcranked guitars. "Spike heels make a hole in a lifeboat" - that could be White's epitaph.

Yet through all the heart-break, he remains a mystery man, as if Don Draper went to that Rolling Stones show on *Mad Men* and ended up jamming with the band. White has the Midwest con-man reserve of Draper, along with the flamboyant-yet-unknowable flash of Jagger. So *Blunderbuss* gets stranger and more fascinating the closer you listen. It doesn't give up any of the man's secrets. And make no mistake: That's exactly how Jack White wants it.

Key Tracks: "Sixteen Saltines," "Blunderbuss"



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Norah Jones' Brand-New Wardrobe

A queen of chill calls in Danger Mouse for a groovier, more adventurous sound

Norah Jones ★★★★★^{1/2}

Little Broken Hearts *Blue Note*



Norah Jones sometimes gets derided for being too downtempo - which, really, is like hating on peaches for being juicy. But her fifth album is a brand-rejigging songwriting collab with Brian "Danger Mouse" Burton that both picks up her pace and pumps up her palette. See "Happy Pills," the bouncy single that triangulates the sexy bounce of the Pretenders' "Brass in Pocket" with a lite-soul kiss-off ballad and an AM-radio bubblegum tune. Call it Norah in Neon. Jones' sweet-smoky purr has always sounded great with meaty grooves: Talib Kweli's "Soon the New Day," Wax Poetic's "Angels." Here, she frolics through reverb and gets frisky over Burton's midtempo beats on "Say Goodbye," savoring the word "misbehave" like a toddler with her hand in the cookie jar. It was fun to hear Jones, the archetypal girl-you'd-take-home-to-Mom, play the fallen woman on Burton's *Rome* LP from last year. That project echoes through "All a Dream," a ghostly mix of dub-reggae groove and spaghetti-Western guitar. On the best songs, the Danger Mouse thumbprint is fainter: "She's 22" sets Jones against wisps of guitar and piano, while "Travelin' On" mates her with a moaning cello. It's a balancing act, which the lyrics occasionally upend - Jones as a murderous lover on "Miriam" is a near-comic stretch. But even good girls need revenge sometimes.

Key Tracks:
"She's 22,"
"Miriam,"
"Happy Pills"

WILL HERMES

HEARTBREAKER
Jones gets a subtle makeover on her fifth LP.



Rufus Wainwright

★★★★^{1/2}

Out of the Game *Decca*

Songwriting heir makes a big, friendly L.A.-pop album



What to do after finishing your first opera and a 19-disc anthology of your life's work? If you're Rufus Wainwright, you make the L.A.-style Great American Pop Album your late mom, singer-songwriter Kate McGarrigle, never felt like making in the 1970s. His formal mastery is so complete it's hilarious, like Albert Pujols playing stickball. But thanks in part to retro-modern producer Mark Ronson, it never feels too arch. "Barbara" (featuring Wilco guitarist Nels Cline) is an ace take on Michael McDonald yacht-rock fluff, while the title track disses mainstream "suckers" in lush harmony over a Steely Dan-ish strut. Hey: If you got it, brother, flaunt it.

W.H.

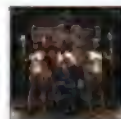
Key Tracks: "Out of the Game," "Montauk"

Santigold ★★★★★

Master of My Make-Believe

Downtown/Atlantic

Art-pop star has ideas galore, but leaves you a little cold



Santigold is a style-magazine editor's fantasy come to life. Her second LP is an impeccably fashionable art-pop hodgepodge: hopped-up dance rock, dub clatter, turbulent post-punk ballads. The production credits include a couple of Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Dave Sitek of TV on the Radio, and Diplo. But who is Santigold? Too often, she's a blank. She sings serviceably and raps quite well. Her songs sound great but feel off, merely gesturing in the direction of emotions. In the end, she's so cool she'll frost up your earbuds. That's a lot more than you can say about most singers, and a lot less than you can say about great ones.

JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: "The Riot's Gone," "Look at These Hoes"

TOP SINGLES

Yuck ★★★½

"Chew"

These U.K. kids unspool a hymn to the Smashing Pumpkins school of slacker grandiosity. From the chorus – "We chew it together," where the "chew" might as well be a slurred "do" – to the warmly melancholic tone of the big guitar solo, it sounds like Clinton-era gold.

NICK CATUCCI

Big Baby Gandhi feat. Das Racist

★★★½ "Blue Magic"

Riding with Queens buddies Das Racist, this 21-year-old "terrorist with no turban, lyricist with no sermon" sounds both skilled and spazzy over a dope, Zenned-out groove. "Y'all sound like Coldplay/Y'all sound like Oprah," he yelps. "Me, I sound so dope-rah."

CHRISTIAN HOARD

Major Lazer

★★★ "Get Free"

Dirty Projectors' Amber Coffman voices this dubby jam from Diplo's reggae project – a politicized lovers' rock ballad evoking post-Katrina New Orleans. "Never got love from a government man/Headin' downstream till the levee gives in," she coos. "Now we gotta swim." True, that.

WILL HERMES

New Order

★★★½

"Elegia" (long version)

"Elegia" first appeared in 1985 as a majestic five-minute waltz. The full version is a 17-minute-plus epic that threatens to fade, rebuilds around tortured guitar bursts, and gives up the ghost in a final feedback gasp. Unintelligible voices flicker, but what's being expressed is clearly beyond words. w.h.



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KINGS OF PAIN
Linkin Park, with Bennington (front)

Linkin Park Throw an Angst-y Dance Party

Linkin Park ★★★ "Burn It Down"

On the first single from Linkin Park's forthcoming *Living Things*, Chester Bennington unpacks, yet again, his propensity for screwing things up. Before zooming into the anguished yowl we've come to demand of a Linkin Park chorus, Bennington delivers some of his prettiest verses ever – and he does it over a burbling synth groove that wouldn't be out of place in an indus-

trial-friendly rave. (Mike Shinoda is, per Linkin Park tradition, on hand for a quickie run of unassuming rhymes.) There's a certain poetry to the "Burn It Down" approach, which draws a sharp line between the smooth and the rough – and leaves open the option of just dancing the night away. In the end, the fire down below comes out on top.

N.C.

A\$AP Rocky's Cocky Gold

A\$AP Rocky ★★★½ "Goldie"

Twenty-three-year-old Harlem rapper A\$AP Rocky is a baby-faced young adult who could pass for a teenager. But he's got the soul of a classicist. "Goldie," the first single from the rising star's forthcoming major-label debut (due in July), is his latest exercise in hip-hop basics: It's full of relentless boasts and insults, delivered with low-key wit and admirably little fuss. The beat, by red-hot producer Hit-Boy ("Ni**as in Paris"), is full of keyboard blips and spacey vocal chorales, and A\$AP Rocky's rhymes fall in the sweet spot between sublime and ridiculous: "You could call me Billy Gates, got a crib in every state," he raps. "Man on the moon, got a condo out in space."

JODY ROSEN

Lambert's Blustery Disco

Adam Lambert ★★★ "Never Close Our Eyes"

This is pop music as simple arithmetic: A Bruno Mars tune plus Dr. Luke production plus an Adam Lambert vocal equals hit radio gold. "Never Close Our Eyes" is that calculated – right down to the lyric, which aims for the same party-at-the-edge-of-doom vibe as recent smashes like "I Gotta Feeling" and "Till the World Ends." ("Why can't we just live life with no consequence/And always live in the now?" Lambert sings.) But there's no denying the pulsating electro drive of Luke's beat, or the blustery power of the melody and lyrics. As for Lambert: The magnificence of his strident vocals defies all formulas and precepts, mathematical and otherwise.

J.R.

BOOTLEGS

Paul Simon

Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Florida, Dec. 5th, 2011

Unlike the vast majority of his 1960s peers, Paul Simon continues to release music on par with his greatest work – and puts on concerts that aren't mere oldies revues. Here, Simon is backed by an ace seven-piece band that combines studio pros with a couple of Graceland musicians. In astoundingly great voice, he mixes new songs ("Rewrite") with deep cuts like 1990's "The Obvious Child." Nostalgia has been profitable for Simon over the years, but this proves he can get along fine without it.



Simon

Bob Dylan

Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica, November 18th, 1979

"This wasn't a concert in the normal kind of sense," Bob Dylan says toward the end of this '79 show. "We're here to give all the praise and glory to God." He's right about that: The set list is composed entirely of his gospel material. But those willing to look past the nakedly evangelical message are in for an incredible treat. "Slow Train," "Pressing On," "Saved" and "Precious Angel" are songs with a passion and fury last heard in 1966, and never again since.

ANDY GREENE

TOTALLY
AGAVE.
TOTALLY
SMOOTH.



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REVIEWS MUSIC

BOOKS



NOT SO
FAR AWAY
King circa
Tapestry



A Natural Woman

★★★★

Carole King *Grand Central*

From "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" to "It's Too Late," Carole King's songs have mixed rock-soul heart-rush with real-world ache. So does her memoir: 1971's *Tapestry* may be the only pop masterwork recorded while the genius at the piano (then a single mom) used session breaks to discipline her daughters - "I was the homework police," King writes. Revealing, humble and cool-aunt chatty, *A Natural Woman* goes from her Brooklyn youth to the Brill Building to Laurel Canyon to the rural West (where she lived for years), through four marriages, and meet-ups with everyone from the Beatles to Slash. Even in hard times, her attitude is lyrical. Of her divorce from Gerry Goffin, she writes, "Yesterday had a no-return policy and today wasn't where I wanted to be." But she still loves tomorrow. **JON DOLAN**



Making Rumours

★★★★

Ken Caillat with Steven Stiefel

John Wiley and Sons

Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* has one of the most dramatic backstories of any album ever, and co-producer Ken Caillat was there for the lovers' quarrels, drunken meltdowns and insane perfectionism. But *Making Rumours* is Caillat's story, not the band's, and the book suffers for it. It's full of technical detail; his account of being throttled by Lindsey Buckingham for deleting a guitar part is one of the few bits that feels new. If you've ever wondered exactly how "Gold Dust Woman" got its sound effects, this is for you. Otherwise, stick with *Behind the Music*. **MEREDITH CLARK**



Bonnaroo: What, Which, This, That, the Other

★★★★

Edited by Holly George-Warren

Abrams Image

How do you get 80,000 fans to spend four days camping in the Tennessee sun? By offering the kind of moments this coffee-table photo book captures: Jim James hoisting his guitar to the sky during My Morning Jacket's rain-soaked set, say, or the White Stripes bowing at one of their last shows ever. Backstage treasures include James Brown, decked out and grinning, and Beck writing out his set list. But often-stale quotes from fans and artists about their 'Roo experience prove what festivalgoers already know: You just had to be there. **PATRICK DOYLE**

B.o.B

★★★★

Strange Clouds *Atlantic*
Another bid for pop glory,
with Taylor, Nicki in tow



With B.o.B., you have to take the good (Taylor Swift and Nicki

Minaj cameos) with the bad (Ryan Tedder, more Ryan Tedder). As on his first album, the Atlanta rapper has called in a crazy array of guests, some of whom (hi, Nicki!) upstage him; he has a few punch lines ("I'm Top Chef, you Top Ramen"), but his strength is being inquisitive, like detailing his wealth, then asking if it matters. Kanye West did this kind of thing for years, and he had punch lines like a *Daily Show* writer. In his heated drawl, his lovely singing, his producing and guitar- and piano-playing, B.o.B. shows off a vast talent. But when the record ends, you just want to hear the Dr. Luke beats again. **ROB TANNENBAUM**

Key Tracks: "Out of My Mind," "Arena"

Of Monsters and Men

★★★★

My Head Is an Animal

Universal Republic

Icelanders take Arcade Fire

to an enchanted forest



This Icelandic six-piece pull off a neat trick: They make whimsical sound tough. Their

debut is full of familiar indie-pop gestures: wintry, finger-picked guitars; lyrics full of woodsy imagery; tunes that swell into campfire-style singalongs. But *Of Monsters and Men* put muscle behind their prettiness, turning songs from cute to grand, and their dippy hippie-isms - "The forest of talking trees, they used to sing about the birds and the bees" - sound mysterious, and vaguely menacing. **JODY ROSEN**

Key Tracks: "Dirty Paws," "Lakehouse"

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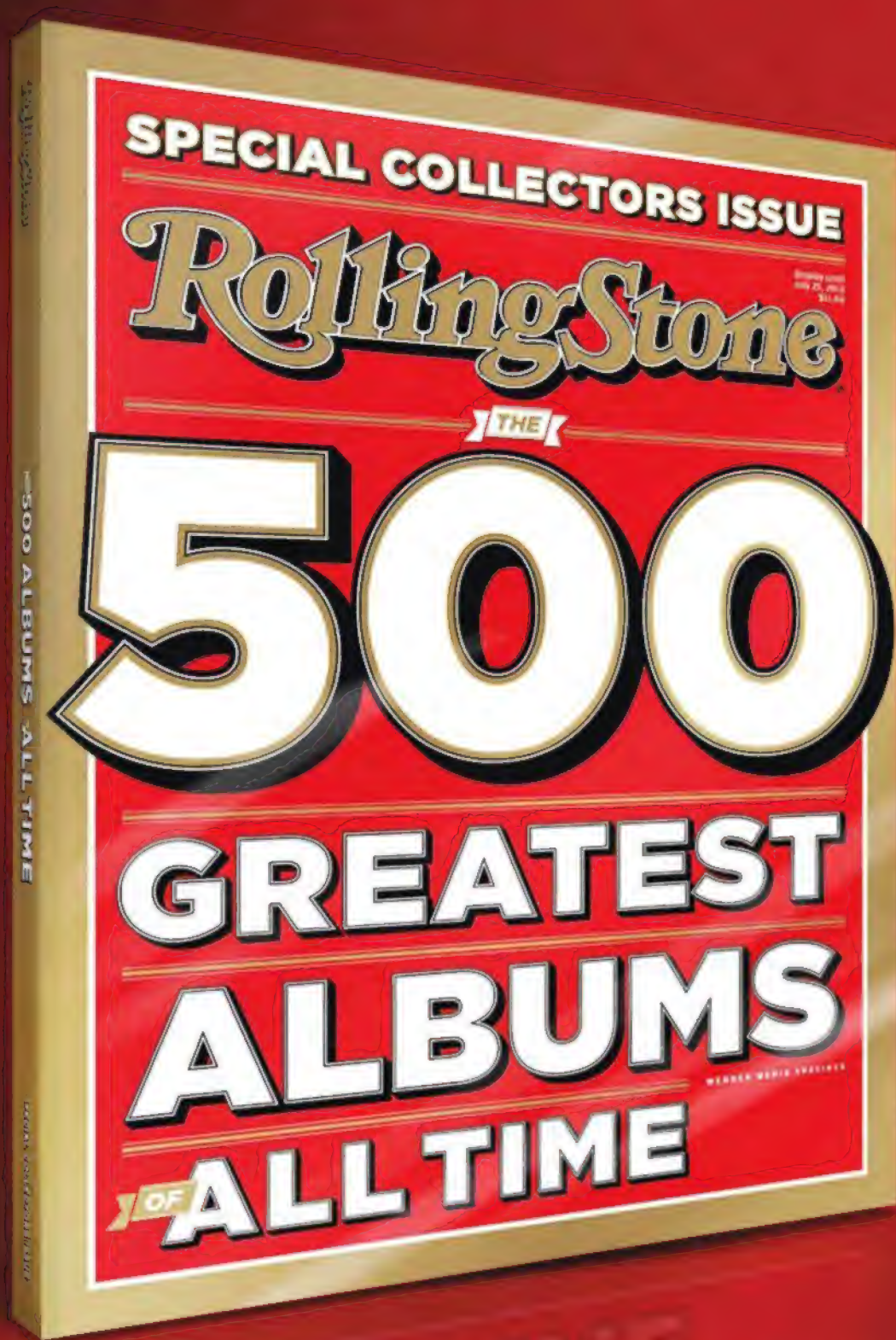
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Django Django

★★★★½ Django Django

Because Music

Scotsmen craft art pop full of hooks, wit and weirdness

BAND TO WATCH

Bands are rarely led by their drummers – there's too big a risk of 25-minute tom-tom solos. But David Maclean, mastermind of the delightful new group Django Django, is an exception. He and his band take a light, spry approach to their groove-centered music, which is experimental but never dour. On their debut (which came out overseas in January), the Djangos are minimalists, working in the lineage of Stereolab, krautrock and the softly alien sounds of Brian Eno. Guitarist Vincent Neff sings about modern life ("the rattle of drums, the click of my thumbs") and the dazed feeling of getting lost in nature. And wherever they travel, Django Django sound relaxed and joyful.

ROB TANNENBAUM

Key Tracks: "Default," "Storm"



KEY FACTS

Hometown Edinburgh, Scotland

Backstory The bandmates met at art school, where they bonded over a shared love of Monty Python.

Sounds Like Part Brian Eno, part Kraftwerk – clattering, groove-based tunes, played with a

healthy sense of mischief.

Smocking Out Django once played a show in medieval smocks, horrifying their new record label. They were unapologetic: "You should never be afraid to make a fool of yourself for art," says Maclean.

The Wanted

★★★

The Wanted *Island Def Jam*
"Glad You Came" guys mix up "mature" with "boring"



The other English-Irish boy band to crash the States in 2012 is slyer than its apple-cheeked counterparts in One Direction, as evidenced by its demi-entendre hit "Glad You Came." But on this EP, the Wanted take cues from Coldplay ("Clocks"-style piano shows up on "Gold Forever") and Kings of Leon ("Use Somebody" moans swirl around "Lose My Mind") to no avail, and their dance pop droops where it should bounce. Playing the brooding type might get girls' attention, but it isn't fun to listen to.

MAURA JOHNSTON

Key Tracks: "Glad You Came," "Lose My Mind"

Miguel

★★★★½

Art Dealer *Chic Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 RCA*
Rising R&B star gets his freak on, in different ways



Is Miguel an arty infiltrator of the mainstream, or a pop dude slumming underground? It's unclear – but the music is undeniable. His new EPs strike a delicious balance between pro forma R&B seduction and the Weeknd's psychedelic bedroom jams. "Adorn" and "Arch n Point" are eerily beautiful, with Miguel's falsetto shimmering over spare, spacey beats. *Vol. 2* is marred by the misogynistic "Broads," but mostly Miguel is – like his obvious model, Prince – chivalrous and weird, a gallant with a freaky side.

JODY ROSEN

Key Tracks: "Adorn," "Arch n Point"

Train

★★★★

California 37 *Columbia*
Hitmakers come back, catchy and kind of odd



For an impeccably crafted pop-rock record, Train's sixth LP is surprisingly deranged. That's thanks to Pat Monahan's lyrics, an eccentric, grammatically dubious mix of confessions and score-settling. In one song, Monahan pledges that when he gets to heaven he'll hang with his wife and ignore the celebs (like "the dude who played the sheriff in *Blazing Saddles*"). There's philosophy ("Even Bieber ain't forever"), and a song where Monahan calls his beloved a mermaid and name-checks Johnny Depp. It's all catchy enough to keep you listening, slack-jawed. J.R.

Key Tracks: "This'll Be My Year," "California 37"

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HAMMER AND SHIELD
Thor (Hemsworth) and
Captain America (Evans)
take on the enemy.

Team Whup-Ass

If summer produces an adventure half as fun as Joss Whedon's superhero smackdown, we're all in for a hot time **By Peter Travers**

The Avengers

★★★★½

Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Evans, Tom Hiddleston

Directed by Joss Whedon

LET ME SPRINT RIGHT TO the point: *The Avengers* has it all. And then some. Six superheroes for the price of one ticket: Iron Man, Thor, Captain America, Hawkeye, Black Widow and the Hulk. It's also the blockbuster I saw in my head when I imagined a movie that brought together the idols of the Marvel world in one shiny, stupendously exciting package. It's *Transformers* with a brain, a heart and a working sense of humor. Suck on that, Michael Bay.

All hail the warrior king of this dizzying, dazzling 3D action epic. That would be writer-director Joss Whedon, enjoying

the afterglow of stellar reviews for deconstructing horror in *The Cabin in the Woods*. Here, in his second directing feature (after *Serenity*), Whedon stages the most exultantly good-humored, head-on, rousing series of traps and escapes since Spielberg was a pup. It's *Citizen Kane* for Citizen Geek.

The plot is merely functional. The world will end if Loki (Tom Hiddleston), the banished demigod, has his way. Loki hates his brother Thor (Chris Hemsworth) and lusts to destroy Earth with help from an alien army. As head of S.H.I.E.L.D. (Strategic Hazard Intervention Espionage Logistics Directorate), Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) has one recourse: Bring in the Avengers, a group of paragons with a rep for not playing well with others.

That's the conflict, and the signal to unleash the FX. But Whedon is exploring richer

ground. He sees the Avengers as the ultimate dysfunctional family. Their powers have estranged them from the normal world. As a result, they're lonely, cranky, emotional fuck-ups, which the actors have a ball playing. Robert Downey Jr. still seems blissfully right as Tony Stark, a.k.a. Iron Man (there's a disarming tickle in his portrayal). He mocks the costume of Captain America (a canny Chris Evans) and calls the World War II hero an "old man." The captain wonders what's under that iron suit, sparking a priceless Downey deadpan: "Genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist."

There's no doubt that the two *Iron Man* hits overshadowed *Thor*, *Captain America* and two Hulk movies at the box office. But Downey doesn't hog the spotlight. Hemsworth's giant-size Thor gets big laughs dismissing his comrades in arms

("You're all so tiny"). And everyone gets to show their skill sets, including Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), the expert archer, and Natasha, a.k.a. the Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson), a killer in gymnastics and martial arts. Johansson has a terrific bit dispatching some Russian goons with her hands literally tied behind her back. And wait till you see the funny and touching stuff the sly Clark Gregg does as Agent Phil Coulson.

Mark Ruffalo is the newcomer to the team, replacing Edward Norton and Eric Bana as Bruce Banner, the nuclear physicist with anger issues that turn him into a hulking green rage machine. Ruffalo brings a scruffy warmth and humor to the role that's revelatory. His verbal sparring with Downey — two pros at the top of their games — is a pleasure to watch. And, wonder of wonders, the techies finally get the scale of the Hulk right. The computerized unjolly green giant is a jumbo scene-stealer. And it's hard not to cheer when Hulk wipes up the floor with Loki.

Speaking of Loki, and it's hard not to, bring on a shower of praise for Hiddleston. A superhero movie is only as good as its villain, and Hiddleston is dynamite. The role of Loki demands intuition, wit and crazy daring, and Hiddleston brings it. The British actor (*War Horse*, *The Deep Blue Sea*) is a force to reckon with.

Loki claims early in the film that his heart "burns with glorious purpose." He's got nothing on Whedon, a filmmaker who knows that even the roaring action sequences won't resonate without audience investment in the characters. Whedon is not afraid to slow down to let feelings sink in. Fanboy heresy, perhaps, but the key to the film's supersmart, supercool triumph. In the final third, when Whedon lets it rip and turns the battle intensity up to 11, all your senses will be blown. I have one word for *The Avengers*: Wowza!

THE TRAVERS TAKE

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The Raven ★★

John Cusack, Alice Eve
Directed by James McTeigue

THERE'S A PROMISING PREMISE on the boil here. What if Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) spent the last days of his life trying to nab a serial killer who's been using macabre ideas from Poe's short stories to off his victims? *The Pit and the Pendulum*, anyone? OK, *The Raven* sounds like a TV series that gets canceled soon after its debut. But it has compensations, chief of which is John Cusack, who plays Poe with just the right blend of romantic longing and tortuous doubt.

Director James McTeigue (*V for Vendetta*), an assistant to the Wachowski brothers on *The Matrix*, pulls us in with the period atmosphere. A few days before his death, Poe was found on a park bench in Baltimore, babbling incoherently. So much for truth. Booze and syphilis reportedly contributed to Poe's demise. But the script, by Ben Livingston and Hannah Shakespeare, posits that he's been poisoned by a crazed fan who adores and loathes him in equal measure.

Cue the flashbacks and a feeble fictional story about how Poe's heiress fiancée, Emily Hamilton (Alice Eve), gets interred alive (*The Premature Burial*) and Poe labors to help police detective Emmett Fields (Luke Evans) find Emily before her breath runs nevermore.

None of this huggermugger generates much excitement. What drew me into the film most was the depiction of Poe's life as

an impoverished poet, trying to make a few bucks by composing detective fiction while fiercely criticizing the work of other writers. In one scene, the anguished Poe wagers that at least one person in a pub will recognize him as an author, best known for "The Raven." Cusack captures that desperation vividly enough to make you wish this was the real Poe story, which *The Raven* on-screen leaves buried alive.

Safe ★★

Jason Statham
Directed by Boaz Yakin

"LUKE WRIGHT, THE BIG APPLE's hardest cop - once upon a time." That's the line in the promo for *Safe* that's meant

Bank Job, going almost the whole distance without blowing a hole in somebody's skull.

Safe director Boaz Yakin (*Remember the Titans*) doesn't put many demands on Statham, though the film asks for more than a cool-dude walk-through, like in the *Transporter* trilogy. After the murder of Luke's wife, he is suicidal, wanted by the Russian and Chinese mobs and legions of Manhattan's corrupt politicians, led by Chris Sarandon. Then something happens that gives Luke a shot at possible redemption. He decides to become protector to Mei (Catherine Chan), a 12-year-old Chinese girl being targeted by the same goons who killed his wife. Mei is a math prodigy with a photo-

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

★★★ 1/2

Dev Patel, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench, Tom Wilkinson
Directed by John Madden

THE "MTV CRIBS" PEEPS ARE probably not clamoring to see this tale of British retirees seeking a retirement haven in India. But screw them if they don't give a damn about watching Brit acting royalty nailing every nuance in this comedy laced with genuine emotion. Adapted by Ol Parker from a novel by Deborah Moggach, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* begins by lining up its cast of quirky characters. There's widowed, financially strapped Evelyn (Judi Dench), bigoted Muriel (Maggie Smith), retired judge Graham (Tom Wilkinson), randy bachelor Norman (Ronald Pickup), senior *femme fatale* Madge (Celia Imrie), and bickering marrieds Douglas (Bill Nighy) and Jean (Penelope Wilton). With a lesser cast, this would be a lineup of TV-movie clichés. But this is a cast that never makes a false move even when the script settles for formula.

Then there is India itself, which exerts a constant allure. The freshly refurbished Best Exotic Marigold Hotel in Jaipur is run by Sonny Kapoor (Dev Patel of *Slumdog Millionaire*), whose cockeyed optimism can't disguise the hotel's many failings and the hurt feelings of seniors whose harried families have outsourced them. Sonny has a sexy young girlfriend (Tena Desae), mostly because the movie thinks it needs one. It doesn't.

As the hotel residents adjust (or don't) to their exotic surroundings, the film gathers an appealingly buoyant spirit. John Madden, who directed Dench to an Oscar in *Shakespeare in Love*, shows a sure hand with all his actors. Dench is a resilient marvel. And watching *Downton Abbey* co-stars Smith and Wilton mix it up is a treat. Wilkinson finds humor and heartbreak in the gay judge. So it's a shame that in the end Madden can't keep the tear-jerking from drowning this delicate cinematic flower. The book knew how to hang tough. The movie, not so much.



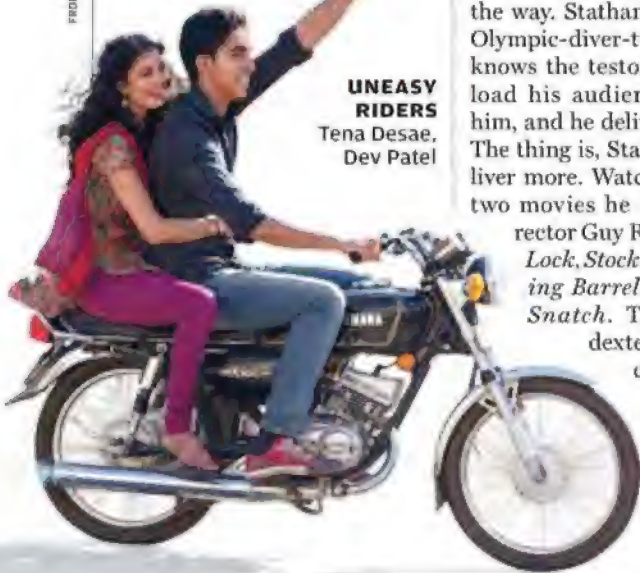
TORTURED SOULS John Cusack goes Poe with Alice Eve in *The Raven* (above). Right: Jason Statham shoots to kill in *Safe*.



to get your blood up. Global action icon Jason Statham plays Luke Wright in *Safe*, so you know this cop is not going down easily. And that's the trouble with *Safe*: You know where it's going every step of the way. Statham, the British Olympic-diver-turned-actor, knows the testosterone overload his audience wants of him, and he delivers big-time. The thing is, Statham can deliver more. Watch him in the two movies he made for director Guy Ritchie: 1998's *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels* and 2000's *Snatch*. There's style, dexterity and mischief in those performances. And Statham got better in 2008's *The*

graphic memory that now lodges the numbers (don't ask) the baddies need to break a code. "Are we safe?" the terrified girl asks Luke. "Till my dying day," says Luke. He means it. Between the fists, kicks, bullets, car chases and broken trachea, the movie could have milked the sentiment of that relationship until you puked. But Statham and the scrappy Chan play it hard. The restraint becomes them. Statham is still playing it safe in *Safe*, but vulnerability is showing through the cracks. Can there be some Statham surprises ahead?

UNEASY RIDERS
Tena Desae,
Dev Patel



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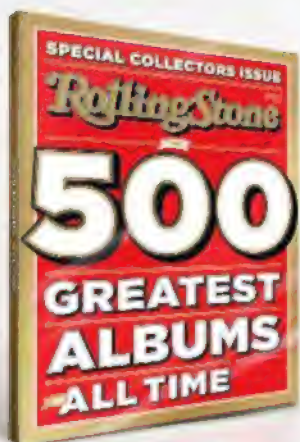


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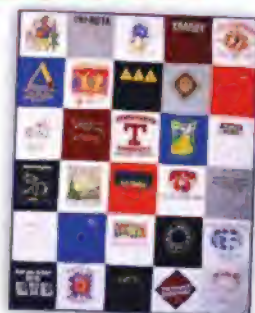
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- 9 Kanye West**
"Mercy" G.O.O.D. Music
- 10 Glee Cast**
"Somebody That I Used to Know"
20th Century Fox TV/Columbia

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College Radio Top 10 Albums

- 1 Andrew Bird**
Break It Yourself Mom + Pop
- 2 The Shins**
Port of Morrow Aural Apothecary/Columbia
- 3 Bear in Heaven**
I Love You, It's Cool Homotapes/Dead Oceans
- 4 La Sera**
Sees the Light Hardly Art
- 5 M. Ward**
A Wasteland Companion Merge
- 6 Oberhofer**
Time Capsules II Glassnote
- 7 Sleight Bells**
Reign of Terror Mom + Pop
- 8 Delta Spirit**
Delta Spirit Rounder
- 9 The Magnetic Fields**
Love at the Bottom of the Sea Merge
- 10 THEEsatisfaction**
awe naturalE Sub Pop

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Top 40 Albums

- 1** **4** **↑** **Lionel Richie**
Tuskegee Mercury Nashville
- 2** **2** **Adele**
21 XL/Columbia
- 3** **1** **Nicki Minaj**
Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded
Young Money/Cash Money
- 4** **NEW** **Monica**
New Life RCA
- 5** **5** **One Direction**
Up All Night Syco/Columbia
- 6** **NEW** **Bonnie Raitt**
Slipstream Redwing
- 7** **15** **Gotye**
Making Mirrors Samples 'N' Seconds/Fairfax
- 8** **16** **Alabama Shakes**
Boys & Girls AT0
- 9** **3** **Rascal Flatts**
Changed Big Machine
- 10** **NEW** **Hoodie Allen**
All American (EP) Hoodie Allen Digital Ex
- 11** **NEW** **Counting Crows**
Underwater Sunshine (Or What We Did on Our Summer Vacation)
Collective Sounds
- 12** **6** **Of Monsters and Men**
My Head Is an Animal Universal Republic
- 13** **11** **Luke Bryan**
Tailgates & Tanlines Capitol Nashville
- 14** **7** **The Hunger Games: Songs From District 12 and Beyond**
Soundtrack Lionsgate
- 15** **NEW** **Halestorm**
Strange Case of... Atlantic
- 16** **NEW** **Prince Royce**
Phase II Top Stop
- 17** **NEW** **Trip Lee**
The Good Life Reach
- 18** **8** **Madonna**
MDNA Live Nation/Interscope
- 19** **10** **Shinedown**
Amaryllis Atlantic
- 20** **27** **fun.**
Some Nights Fueled by Ramen
- 21** **NEW** **M. Ward**
A Wasteland Companion Merge
- 22** **14** **NOW 41**
Various Artists Universal/EMI/Sony Music
- 23** **9** **Marvin Sapp**
I Win Verity
- 24** **20** **Eric Church**
Chief EMI Nashville
- 25** **21** **Jason Aldean**
My Kinda Party Broken Bow
- 26** **17** **Adele**
19 XL/Columbia
- 27** **12** **Kelly Clarkson**
Stronger 19
- 28** **35** **The Shins**
Port of Morrow Aural Apothecary/Columbia
- 29** **28** **Drake**
Take Care Young Money/Cash Money
- 30** **24** **Whitney Houston**
Whitney: The Greatest Hits Arista
- 31** **19** **Bruce Springsteen**
Wrecking Ball Columbia
- 32** **NEW** **Trampled by Turtles**
Stars and Satellites BanjoDad
- 33** **NEW** **Think Like a Man**
Soundtrack Epic
- 34** **NEW** **Bassnectar**
Vava Voom Amorphous
- 35** **25** **Miranda Lambert**
Four the Record RCA Nashville
- 36** **NEW** **Demon Hunter**
True Defiance Solid State
- 37** **13** **Shake It Up: Live 2 Dance: Music From the Disney Channel Series**
Soundtrack Walt Disney
- 38** **18** **Lady Antebellum**
Own the Night Capitol Nashville
- 39** **34** **The Black Keys**
El Camino Nonesuch
- 40** **32** **Rihanna**
Talk That Talk S&P/Def Jam



Darling Nicki

Despite being one of 2012's most hyped releases, *Roman Reloaded* dropped to Number Three in its second week - giving the top spot to Lionel Richie.



Slipping Back

Raitt covers Gerry Rafferty and Bob Dylan - and busts out tasty solos - on her first album in seven years. It sold 64,000 LPs, her best week since 1994.



Shakin' All Over

Garage-soul crew Alabama Shakes has cashed in on its huge early buzz by selling an impressive 70,000 copies of its debut LP in two weeks.



Bass in Your Face

Electro hippie Lorin Ashton, a.k.a. Bassnectar, has sold out venues like Red Rocks with his laser-heavy show. His ninth LP sold 13,000 copies this week.

00 Chart position on April 18th, 2012
00 Chart position on April 18th, 2012
NEW New Entry
Re-Entry
Greatest Gainer

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From the Vault

RS 499, May 7th, 1987

TOP 10 SINGLES

- 1 Cutting Crew**
"(I Just) Died in Your Arms" Virgin
- 2 Jody Watley**
"Looking for a New Love" MCA
- 3 U2**
"With or Without You" Island
- 4 Madonna**
"La Isla Bonita" Sire
- 5 Crowded House**
"Don't Dream It's Over" Capitol
- 6 Prince**
"Sign 'O' the Times" Paisley Park
- 7 Bryan Adams**
"Heat of the Night" A&M
- 8 Chris DeBurgh**
"The Lady in Red" A&M
- 9 Fleetwood Mac**
"Big Love" Warner
- 10 Aretha Franklin and George Michael**
"I Knew You Were Waiting (For Me)" Arista



On the Cover


"We were a freak show for a while. We felt like fish out of water. 'What are we doing in rock & roll?' We almost felt that we should do drugs out of guilt, to make people feel at home. Over the last few years, I've drank far too much and did far too many things out of this odd reverse guilt." —Bono

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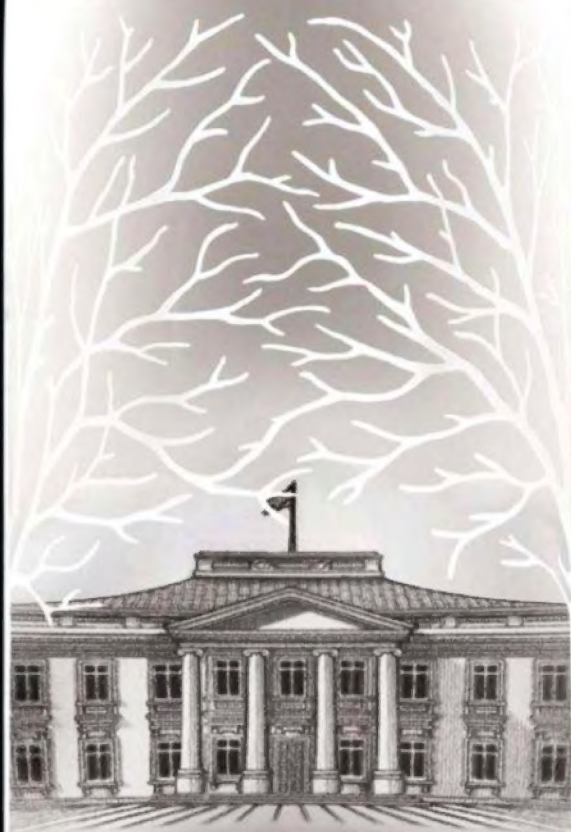
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